This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Digitized by Google

Mervyn Marshall.

Digitized by Google

AZ 731

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE CHASSEUR D'AFRIQUE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

CHASSEUR D'AFRIQUE,

AND

OTHER TALES.

BY

HUGH-MULLENUEX WALMSLEY,
COLONEL IMPERIAL OTTOMAN ARMY,

Author of "Journal of a Bashi Bazouk," "Sketches of Algeria during the Kabyle War."

AZ 731

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
1864.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

Digitized by Google

BIBLIOTHEQUE CANTONALE
LAUSANNE
ET UNIVERSITAIRE

S, -S.

LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

Digitized by Google

TO

MY SISTER ADAH

I DEDICATE

This Volume.

H. M. W.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

TRUTH is, it is said, stranger than fiction; and the only hope the author of this work has of attracting the attention of the reading public to his book lies in its truthfulness. The short tale entitled "The Chasseur d'Afrique" is, word for word, a truthful account of the adventures of a French cavalry officer during the late Italian War. The name alone has been altered; and though the writer of these lines helped to commit to the earth, after the battle of Solferino, the lifeless body of as good a man and as brave a soldier as ever lived, yet his mission of sorrow did not end there.

Another remained, and a more painful one, namely, to convey to the dead soldier's young widow those cherished, yet sad memorials of the past, the dead man's sword—in this case broken in his last fight—and the glittering Cross of the Legion, stained with

Digitized by Google

the blood traitorously shed by a bad and revengeful man.

The mournful mission was never fulfilled. The tale itself tells why. But if any of those who read this tale ever pass through the old forest, they may yet find wandering there an aged, grey-haired man —a dreamer of forest dreams; and they may yet look from the battlements of Dennecourt's Fort de l'Empereur on the mighty trees of the forest, and the far landscape stretching away towards distant Paris. Old "Père Ganne" is dead; but the little inn exists at Barbizon, its walls covered with the works of men whose names still live in the minds of all.

The second tale is equally truthful, though the scenes narrated in it are those which passed in days long since gone by. An old house existed, and yet exists, in the Grande Rue Fontainebleau. It had formerly been used as a convent, and one part of it, under the name of "Père la Chaise," was said to have been inhabited by the old priest of that name, whose memory lives in the cemetery called after him in Paris. By a curious chain of accidents, the property passed into the hands of the writer. When

Digitized by Google

making some alterations, a wall was removed. In its thickness there was a cupboard, the wood-work eaten away by damp and by time. Some pieces of what seemed to have once been priests' vestments, a quantity of dust, and a lot of mouldy papers, were all the cupboard contained. It had doubtless been walled up when some alterations had been made, and its contents ignored by the workmen.

Even the names in this tale have been retained. The Count d'Hervily really perished as is related; and if any of his descendants yet live, there is nothing in this history of a rough and eventful period to hurt or to annoy them.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE CHASSEUR D'AFRIQUE.

CHAPTER I.

FONTAINEBLEAU — THE GOOD LADIE.

THE very name which heads this opening chapter calls up a host of vague, shadowy remembrances, looming dimly through the veil of romance thrown over an old town and its older forest by the half-forgotten traditions of the past. Reign after reign has contributed some historical event to be for ever connected with the grey towers and waving oaks of Fontainebleau; those towers whose very origin is now lost in the haze of past years, and that forest where once the robber and the outlaw lurked waiting for their prey; while the kingly St. Louis administered simple justice under the shade of the mighty oaks and beech-trees. The town itself remains pretty much what it ever was, and its inhabitants yet lead the quiet, dreamy life they love, surrounded by their old forest, whose trees seem to shut out with their

Digitized by Google

leafy screen the noise and tumult of the outer world, and to keep in the old tales and legends of the past, which hang like a mirage over the grey towers of the château, and the mighty oaks of the circling forest. Formerly, outlaw and robber contended for the ownership of its forest glades with the wild boar and the wolf, and when the royal hunt swept through the land, the courtiers, well-mounted as they necessarily were, often met with more perilous adventures than they anticipated. It was when returning from one of these hunts the king himself nearly lost his life. The legend runs that being separated from his suite, and finding himself quite alone in the then pathless and tangled forest, he ascended a little conical hill, whose summit yet towers above the tree-tops, in the hope of either seeing some of his retinue, or of at least discovering his whereabouts. He found neither, but instead of that was attacked by an armed band of robbers, who had marked the rich dresses of the royal hunt, and had been lying in wait for stragglers. They did not know the king, and perhaps would not have respected him had they done so; but St. Louis, though a saint, was a soldier also, and laid about him so vigorously, that what between the sturdy blows he dealt with his good sword, and the repeated calls for help which his hunting-horn gave forth, he remained master of the hill-top; and the conqueror, in memory of the risk he had run, built there a small chapel. The chapel soon obtained a certain sanctity, and when the solemn chant of the mass was heard

Digitized by Google

floating over the tree-tops in the stillness of the night, the passers-by, few and far between as they then were, would cross themselves, muttering a hasty prayer to be protected from the robber and the outlaw, and hurry on their way invoking the protection of the dead warrior saint, King Louis. Suddenly the solemn chant was silent, and eventually the bodies of the monks who had inhabited the little chapel on the hill of St. Louis, were discovered. They had been ruthlessly slaughtered by the prowling robber bands for the sake of the wretched plunder the simple chapel afforded. Their places were not long vacant, but the new comers fulfilled their mission only for a time, meeting sooner or later the same fate at the hands of the rude banditti of the day, who, not respecting even the altars of their professed faith, plundered the forest chapel, and killed the unresisting monks from time to time. The casual visitor to the forest notices the ruined remains of more than one of these little chapels, but hardly dreams of the many tales of suffering, privation, and death connected with these crumbling walls, but the tale of one tells that of all. At length the government of the day, in order to stay the useless effusion of blood, forbade the solemnization of religious rites in the forest. But even this did not put an end to the evil, for though the little chapels gradually mouldered away as years went by, fanatic monks, eager to gain what they looked on as a crown of martyrdom, took up their abode from time to time in

Digitized by Google

one or other of the ruinous forest chapels, and then blood still flowed around the desecrated altar stones. Human life was not of much value in those early days of French history, but as the law found itself powerless to protect the fanatic monks, the little chapels, scattered here and there amidst the spreading beeches and gnarled oaks of the forest land, were almost wholly destroyed in order that their walls might not be stained with murder which the hand of justice could seldom punish, and never prevent. The remains of a few of the principal ones are yet to be traced, but only two of these enjoy any celebrity. A few time-worn stones, covered by thick brushwood, mark the spot where the good King Louis fought with the outlaw band, and here, where many a poor priest's blood has flowed beneath the midnight robbers' blows, the peasant seeks among the scattered stones the early violets, and the wood anemone. They are found peeping from the fern and broken ruin, and the poor peasant girls, who usually seek them to deck the altar of the only chapel which yet exists as such in the forest, believe that these early flowers, gathered on the conical hill of St. Louis, are in some way connected with the place, and they never fail, while gathering them, to breathe a prayer for the souls of the slaughtered monks whose blood so often flowed on the same spot as that where the early violet and wood anemone bloom.

The Hermitage of Franchard, another of these sylvan chapels, and a larger one than that of St.

Digitized by Google

Louis ever was, yet exists, but it has wholly failed to retain the halo of sanctity, and wild romance, which still floats over the conical hill of the warlike king. Every one who visits the forest, and finds his way to the Hermitage of Franchard, observes the ruined remains, listens to the old tale of priestly murders, and then visits the thriving restaurant which has risen to celebrity on the ruins of the old Hermitage. A fair is held there once a year. The people flock from all the adjacent towns and villages to see and be seen; even Imperial Paris contributes hundreds of curious sight-seers. Booths, games, races, and small theatres drive a thriving trade by day, while by night the surrounding forest is illuminated, the lights glimmering through the trees, and shedding a vague brightness here and there, soon to be swallowed up in the thick darkness of the forest night. Dancing, singing and playing goes on all night long. Punch is here in his glory, the small theatres and refreshment tents are crowded; and figures appear, emerging from the darkness of the forest into the light of the circle illuminated, and disappear from the light into the darkness in quick succession. The breeze sighs through the forest leaves, and the music and laughter is borne away into the far solitudes where the deer wander alarmed by the midnight sounds which invade their rest. St. Louis' Chapel has passed away, a few ruined stones and old legends remain to mark its former glories, and if the cowled forms of the martyred monks of Franchard could revisit the spot

Digitized by Google

where they lived as hermits in that lonely forest but to gain the martyr's crown they coveted, they would be anything but edified by the transformation their old moss-grown hermitage has undergone. But there is still one, and one only, of the woodland chapels which yet exists on something of the same footing as it once did, and from which the reputation of former virtues has not departed. It is even to this day a quiet little spot, its grey walls hardly to be marked at a distance among the old stems of the oaks, and its origin is nearly forgotten.

In days gone by there was, runs the legend, a great boar-hunt in the forest, and the king, with his court, was present. Who that king was tradition has not said, but the hunt was successful, and the horns rang merrily through the wild glades, mixed with the loud shouts and laughter of the royal suite. At last the boar, fairly tired out, turned to bay, and as the ringing horns gave out their cheering notes, a young noble, eager for distinction, dashed forward to confront the enraged animal. Alarmed by the terrific appearance of the huge boar—which had been harboured for the royal pleasure on account of its enormous size and known ferocity—the young noble's horse bolted, and, refusing to obey the rider's efforts, at last fairly run away with him. The tale says that the king was very much amused at this incident, but it certainly was no laughing matter to the unfortunate man, who, turning his back, by compulsion, on the laughing monarch, took his way,

Digitized by Google

at top speed, through the forest. Bending low in his saddle, to escape being swept out of it, and doing his utmost to attain a mastery over the fiery horse which had thus disgraced him, the frightened noble swept on. Many a mighty tree, many a huge boulder of rock, had been safely passed; the margin where the forest land ceased was nearly gained, and the breathless rider was just offering up his thanks for his preservation from imminent danger, when he was swept out of his saddle. Whether he had been struck by the bough of a tree, or had lost his seat from some sudden swerve of the frightened horse, he never knew, but his foot remaining firmly fixed in the stirrup, a terrible death awaited him. Just as he fell—just as his eyes took their last glance around him, concentrating in one long earnest look the past, the present and the future—just at that very moment when his head touching the ground, death seemed inevitable, the horse stopped, trembling and affrighted, while the rider, confused by the rough usage through which he had passed, saw a white figure standing near him. The poor terrified, bewildered noble picked himself up. Extricating his foot from the stirrup, he soothed his no less frightened steed, which stood stock-still, trembling with terror.

A few weeks elapsed, and on the spot where the horse had stopped in his mad career, the white walls of a little chapel rose among the forest trees, built by the grateful noble, who was fully convinced that, to

Digitized by Google

the actual and visible interposition of the "Holy Virgin," he owed his life. A splendid statue adorned it, and as the legend became known, the chapel of the "Good Ladie" beneath the oaks of the forest became, and still remains, a sacred spot.

Once a year the ladies of the place, headed by the priests of the parish church carrying the cross, walk in procession from the town to the little chapel. This ceremony presents a picturesque appearance as the ladies and young girls, dressed in white, with long white veils, their heads uncovered, save by wreaths of flowers, move along the broad High Street towards the forest. Passing the barrier, they enter among the trees, and the loud chant of the choristers floats among the green leaves as the procession winds its way to where the little chapel of the "Good Ladie" peeps through the forest trees. The handsome marble statue has been replaced by a more modern work of art, but the chapel itself enjoys a high repute, and it is not often unoccupied. Still there are times and periods when the kind offices of the "Good Ladie" of the forest are more eagerly sought after than at others, and that, too, not always by the lower orders or peasantry of the neighbourhood, and such was the case at the period when our tale opens. It was spring time; not that first early spring, when the bursting buds have not yet opened, and when there is little or no shade beneath the forest trees.

For the spring of the year was just merging into summer, the beeches and the oak-trees of the forest

Digitized by Google

were in full leaf, and the cuckoo's note, which had sounded late and early through the green glades, was nearly silent now. There were plenty of strangers wandering that year over France, and many of them found their way to the forest; the consequence of which was the old wrinkled beggar woman, who from time immemorial has sat upon the steps just inside the iron rail which separates the "Good Ladie's" Chapel from the overshadowing oak-trees, was reaping a good harvest.

How that decrepid, wrinkled old woman is ever to be seen, winter and summer, in the accustomed place, seems a mystery. The trees about the chapel grow larger and larger, some of them die away from age, or are marked for felling; the young children who play about in the forest glades near the town grow older, finally disappear; their children take their place, and go the same way; and yet an old wrinkled, decrepid woman, ever dressed in faded black, sits on the steps of the Ladie's Chapel, receiving in silence the little donation the "Good Ladie's" votaries see fit to give her. Mighty events were progressing then, and that summer time was destined to see changes, affecting not only France alone but the whole world. Kings were to be wiped out of the muster-roll of royalty; the loud-mouthed guns thundered on the battle-plains of Italy and Lombardy, and their sound echoed in the hearts of many who dwelt near the forest-land, for Fontainebleau is a garrison town. Muttering and grumbling to herself,

Digitized by Google

the old woman sat on the stone steps leading to the chapel, and a smile of satisfaction was on her old wrinkled face.

"Good morning, madame," she said, as she held out her shaking palm to receive the expected coin. "Good morning; how quiet the forest is to-day." A lady stood inside the rail, and one, too, evidently well known to the old beggar woman. Every morning she might be seen taking her way up the forest path towards the little chapel. Her clear olive-coloured complexion and large dark eyes telling of southern birth; of the fertile plains and olive-trees of sunny Provence. She took her way, accompanied only by a large black Newfoundland, to the little chapel, dropping the usual two-sous piece into the old woman's extended palm, and answering the muttered good morning as she passed on to the little altar; while the dog, apparently perfectly accustomed to the whole affair, lay lazily down just outside the building, his black muzzle turned towards the gate, and resting on his outstretched paws. "Hum!" muttered the old crone; "Madame Isabey has heard good news to-day, and yet there is only the old two-sous piece for the poor old Marie." And many went and came: some merely looking into the little chapel from curiosity; others kneeling by the lady's side before the forest altar, where the wreaths made of the early forest flowers hung; and the large dog went fast asleep, and struggled and whined in his dreams; while the old woman counted over the

Digitized by Google

coppers she had received that morning, grumbling and muttering to herself because they were not more.

It was the twenty-first of June, and the sun was hot and powerful, making itself felt even beneath the leafy screen of forest boughs, and still the lady knelt before the "Good Ladie's" altar, her thoughts far away, until the black Newfoundland, wearied with waiting, rose, and peeping into the iron rail, shook himself, uttering several sharp barks one after another. Roused from her reverie, the lady rose, and her eyes were filled with tears, as she passed out of the little chapel, and stopped to speak to the old woman on the threshold.

"We have good news, Marie; good news from the army, and from my husband."

"Ay, ay, Madame Isabey, there is good news for every one except old Marie; and the only news for her is that winter will be here anon, and the sticks are hard to find in the forest now for the winter's fire."

"Well, Marie, if wood is scarce, here's something to help," replied Madame Isabey, as she moved forward, the old woman thanking her in a surly kind of tone as she passed on, and the big dog bounding and barking with delight, for the time passed before the little chapel had been a sore trial to him; and the lady and the dog passed down the forest glade, the bright June sunshine streaming through the trees, and falling in lines of light along the green

Digitized by Google

grass, and over the grey rocks; while the woodpecker's note, and the sharp stroke of the axe, or crack of the breaking boughs, came to her ear as she moved along, leaving the white walls of the Ladie's Chapel glaring in the light, with the withered old crone seated on the step, counting, and grumbling over her morning's gains. Pleasant thoughts were accompanying Madame Isabey's footsteps as she moved down the forest glades; and, if all the "Good Ladie's" votaries left the little chapel as happy and contented as she did, a morning's walk there, under the shade of the oaks and beeches, were worth undertaking.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

THE RECONNAISSANCE.

THREE days after Madame's Isabey's pleasant walk under the greenwood, the French army, commanded by the Emperor in person, lay encamped on the plains near Milan. Rapid and decided in their movements, the French generals had led their men to success after success. The victory of Montebello had been won, a discouraged but not yet demoralized army lay before them, barring the victors' way, and the Austrians were supposed to be retreating, and massing their columns on some strong post in their rear. Milan was free; the rich plains of Lombardy were at the mercy of the conqueror; but right in front lay the strong fortress of the Quadrilateral, and, retreating on them for a base, the whole Austrian army, under the direct command of their chivalrous Emperor. No easy task lay before the victors, and what made matters worse was, that information as to the position of the enemy was sorely needed. So while the sun shone brightly over the oaks and beeches of Fontainebleau, while Madame Isabey and her faithful companion, the black Newfoundland, wandered under the shade, this duty, on the intelligent

Digitized by Google

performance of which much of the future of the war depended, was entrusted to Captain Isabey. The Cross of the Legion now glittered on his breast, and it was the news of this which had made his young wife's eyes sparkle, and her step light, the day we have seen her walking to the Ladie's Chapel, where her wreath of early wild flowers hung. The glittering Cross had been won at Montebello, and the 23rd of June found the young captain at the head of his squadron, moving cautiously over the plain towards Malegnano. It was no easy duty that was to be performed, for the whole Austrian force lay in front. The day wore on, and it was evening when a small village was discovered, and as the blaze of the Italian sun sank gradually towards nightfall, its rays glistened from the steel trappings, and on the white uniforms of an Austrian outpost. Isabey and his men had been skirting the borders of one of those small deep streams so often met with in wandering through the rich plains of Lombardy. High fields of Indian corn lay between him and Malegnano, the first scattered buildings of which were just discernable from the spot where he had halted his troop, It was evident an Austrian force held the place, but what that force was, whether an outpost, or part of the main body, became his duty to discover. There are, perhaps, few situations more trying to a young and ardent Frenchman than such a one as this. Honour, distinction, promotion lay before him, as pushing aside the long stalks of the maize which concealed his

Digitized by Google

troop, he cautiously forced his way onward, on foot and alone; for he had dismounted, and leaving his troop under the charge of a subaltern, he had crept forward to profit by the last rays of the setting sun, lighting up the buildings and houses of Malegnano. Just as he reached the edge of the maize plantation, beyond which he would find little cover, and was hesitating whether he should proceed any further or return to his men, whom he knew to be anxiously waiting him, a small wooden hut, not fifty yards from him, caught his eye. Where there was a human habitation he would find, in all probability, some one from whom he could glean information as to the number and nature of the force in his front; so, still keeping within the belt of maize, which so effectually concealed him, he pushed his way onwards towards the hut. Well for him that he did not emerge from the friendly cover, for hardly had he gone half a dozen yards when the clatter of horses and the jingle of accoutrements struck his ear, while just round the corner of a neighbouring clump of trees a troop of some twenty mounted men was seen, the setting sun lighting up their glittering accoutrements and tinging the points of their long lances with its light. Onward they came, at a sharp trot, raising a cloud of dust as they jingled and clanked along the dried up road. On they came, preceded by their officer, right for the spot where Isabey crouched in the maize. A minute more and they were close to him, another and they were passed. He was safe, and peeping

Digitized by Google

from between the maize stalks, he could see the whole troop halt beside the very hut towards which he had been taking his way. Five minutes later and he would have been caught like a rat in a trap. The hut was used as an Austrian outpost, and a guard was mounted there every night at sunset, with orders to retire on Malegnano if attacked. It must have been deemed an important post, for the subaltern officer, whom Isabey had marked as riding in front of the troop, entered the hut, and when, after a quarter of an hour's watching, the Austrians rode away, once more passing him, their numbers were diminished, while ten horses picquetted in front of the little hut, and one in rear, showed the out picquet to consist of ten men, under the command of a subaltern. Isabey was on the point of retiring, but the danger of his situation was not yet at an end. Out of the hut at this moment came five men. One of them was evidently intended as a vidette, for mounting his horse, which, like the rest, had remained fully accoutred, he rode forward some twenty paces from the hut. Here the ground dipped, rising again with a gentle undulation, for some hundred paces, so that the mounted vidette, having the crest of the rise marked sharply against the clear sky, could not fail to see and mark the smallest object crossing it. The remaining four men, drawing their swords, came forward towards the spot where Isabey, crouching among the maize, eagerly noted their movements. He knew their object at once. It was to procure forage and bedding

Digitized by Google

for their horses, and he therefore did not fear for himself, but he was indeed very anxious respecting his own men. They were not a quarter of a mile distant, and his prolonged absence might alarm them for his safety, and justify his subaltern in sending to look after him. Minute after minute passed. The Austrian officer came out of his hut, and smoking a short pipe, took his way towards the advanced vidette. The four men plied their long swords vigorously, every sweep of them bringing them a step nearer to where the Frenchman was concealed; but the danger lay not with them. Laughing and talking, though he could not understand them, they walked on until they were nearly within fifteen paces of him, and then, collecting the corn they had cut, and which the poor Lombard who had planted it never destined for such a use, they tied it into large bundles by means of a rope each man carried over his shoulders, and hoisting their burthens on their backs, they took their way towards the horses, who pawed and whinnied at their approach. The officer had not yet returned, and Isabey waited, hoping to see him do so, but minute after minute passed, and his impatience prompted him to move. Slowly, carefully, and with great caution he effected his retreat, creeping through the long stalks, and putting them aside as he moved on for fear their unusual motion should be noticed by the outlying vidette. Every step he took, however, decreased the danger. He had now passed over half the distance which separated him from his men. It

Digitized by Google

was nearly dark, and before him lay a little water-course, dividing the fields of maize. He had left his sword behind him before starting, and was armed only with his pistol. Thus unencumbered he easily cleared the little brook, and having done so, just before he plunged into the second maize field, he turned, and looking in the direction of the post he had left, paused to listen. Not a sound was to be heard, save the gentle trickling of the water and the rustle of the Indian corn as the evening breeze swept through it. The stars were peeping out here and there, but there was no moon, and he was just in the act of turning round to pursue his way, when a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder. Turning suddenly, two glittering eyes glared full into his face, and the starlight glinted from the steel trappings and polished accoutrements of the Uhlan officer he thought safe in the little hut. In moments such as these, thoughts whirl swiftly through the brain, and Isabey felt instinctively that it was not only a matter of life and death with him, but one dearer still, the failure or success of his mission. The Austrian had doubtless discovered his troop just as he had stumbled on the hut. In an instant Isabey sprang at the Uhlan's throat, clutching it in his nervous grasp. A fierce struggle ensued, and the quiet stars shone forth, the only witness of the scene. Encumbered with his sabre, the Austrian fought at a disadvantage, but in his first emotion Isabey had dropped his pistol, and had he not done so he dared not have fired. The

Digitized by Google

alarm would have been given, and according to orders in such situations, the out picquet would have fallen back on Malegnano, leaving a dead man only as the result of his mission, and the Austrians fully informed of the French advance. At length they rolled together into the little brook, damming up the water with their struggling bodies, and tearing away the dark rich mould which formed its banks as they fought on. Still the Frenchman was uppermost, and though panting and exhausted retained his hold of his adversary's throat. The water welled up around them, rising inch by inch as there, beneath the starlight, the two foes fought on in stern silence, struggling, kicking, and clutching each other in a deadly embrace. At last the Austrian's head was beneath the water, the struggle gradually ceased, at length ended altogether, and the murmur of the brook was heard again as it flowed onward on its course, calmly and smoothly, beneath the starlight. Dragging himself up the broken bank, Isabey, panting and breathless, his uniform soiled with dirt, torn in the death-struggle and heavy with water, paused for strength. In the intervals of his laboured breathing sounds in the maize came upon his ear. More than one person was evidently advancing towards him, though with silence and precaution. The Austrian outpost had then been alarmed, and he was lost, and with him his mission would be also lost, ingloriously lost. He was utterly exhausted, powerless to fight or to fly, his breath coming with labouring

Digitized by Google

struggles, and his heart beating audibly. Stooping down he searched for his pistol. The ground was beaten hard, and the long maize trampled down and broken, for yards where the fierce struggle had taken place. He found the weapon covered with dust and mud, but he felt renewed confidence and fresh strength as his hand clutched it. Stilling as far as he was able the beatings of his heart, he listened. The sounds which had alarmed him were again audible. People were forcing their way through the maize, but they came from the quarter where his own men lay, and help was at hand, and he had but to wait. Bending over the stream he looked down. There lay his late adversary, with the pale starlight flickering over the white face and the torn and defaced uniform, but though the body was half under water the face was free, the stream having found vent for itself on either side. Just at this moment a dark object appeared some ten paces below him. Isabey cautiously whistled, and three of his own men with the sergeant-major of his troop soon stood beside him.

The body of the Austrian was raised and carried away. He was not dead, and a quarter of an hour later returned to consciousness to find himself in the midst of his enemies, bound, and a prisoner.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

THE SKIRMISH.

A HURRIED consultation soon followed, Captain Isabey calling his subalterns around him. They now knew that a strong force lay before them, and that Malegnano was held by the Austrian rear guard. From their prisoner they could extract nothing. On his becoming again conscious—he had been gagged, for fear his voice should reach the ears of the Austrian vidette, known to be within a quarter of a mile of them; but Captain Isabey, placing two of his troopers beside the Austrian as he lay on the ground, with orders to discharge their pistols into his head if he attempted to shout, had questioned him. Whether it was that the French officer's German was none of the purest, or that the Austrian's hot blood had not been sufficiently cooled by his bath, matters not. Sullen and obstinate, his black glittering eye rolled from side to side as he looked at first one, then another of the pistol barrels, the cold iron almost touching his wet, dirt-begrimed forehead. At one time his chest filled, and his mouth opened as though, in defiance of death, he had determined to alarm his men; but Captain Isabey's

Digitized by Google

hand was over his mouth, and the gag was instantly replaced, not, however, before a sullen and disdainful smile had passed over the face of the fallen officer. Again Isabey and his officers assembled, and it was finally arranged that the Austrian outpost should be attacked before sunrise, and that performed, the little troop were to fall back on the French advance as rapidly as possible. The men were soon at work with their swords on the long maize, the bundles of forage each trooper carried, were thrown to the horses, provisions were taken from the haversacks, and though they dared not water their horses, or light a fire, neither the one nor the other seemed to be considered a privation by man or steed. The night wore on drearily, for not a man slept. A horse breaking loose, or whinnying might betray the whole, and with the exception of one dismounted man, who was pushed forward towards the brook in their front, and another about twenty paces to their rear, every man stood or lounged beside his horse the whole night. In the middle of the cleared space occupied by the troop lay the inert figure of the Austrian Uhlan. More than once a dark form might be seen to stoop over him, for it grieved Captain Isabey to be forced to detain an officer, though an enemy, in such a manner. There was no help for it, and whenever he stooped over him, thinking the poor fellow slept, he met the dark, restless, sneering black eyes, wide open, looking into his in the pale starlight.

Digitized by Google

An hour before dawn the whole troop mounted, in silence, with the exception of a corporal and two men left behind with the prisoner. It was Captain Isabey's determination to skirt the plain, and gain the high road. If seen coming towards the hut, his troop would for a time be taken for some detachment or patrol from Malegnano, and be allowed to advance, and he should thus be between the Austrian outpost and the main body. It was a daring scheme, full of hazard, but Isabey was a daring man, and if one of his troop lived to reach head-quarters his reconnaissance would be successful. Some saddle would be pretty sure to be emptied in the coming struggle, and the spare horse would mount their prisoner.

They gained the high road just as day was breaking, and turning sharply to their left, rode down it. Gradually the dawn became more and more visible, and soon the little hut was seen looking faint, and indistinct in the dim light. A low whispered word brought the leading files to a halt, and the whole troop closed up. The lights of Malegnano might be seen, looking pale and sickly, far away in their rear, as the dawn became more and more distinct, while towards the little hut all seemed silence and security. Again the whispered word of command ran through the troop, and with drawn sabres, at a sharp trot, Isabey's men charged down upon the hut. Still all was silence, and breaking to right and left as they neared the obstacle, the excited troopers rode wildly

Digitized by Google

round it, to find the hut deserted, and the picquet withdrawn.

The full danger of his situation now flashed across Isabey's mind, for doubtless his troop had been discovered, and the Austrian trumpets and bugles were ringing merrily on the clear air of an Italian morning, as vexed and disappointed the baffled French took their way back. There was no time to lose, and yet a long détour was unavoidable, for the men left with the prisoner had to be picked up, so that the morning sun was just peeping above the horizon, gilding the long maize stalks with light, as the troop once more drew bridle in the open space, where they had wasted the hours of the previous night. As Captain Isabey dismounted, he ordered the prisoner to be unbound, the gag removed, and standing by him, his pistol loaded and cocked in his hand, a hurried conversation ensued. Stiff with his long and painful bondage, the Austrian's eye flashed, as he stretched his half numbed limbs, and pushed the sodden hair from his dust-begrimed forehead. "Monsieur," said Isabey, "I require your word of honour as an officer, that you will in no way by word or deed point out our route, should we be followed."

For the first time the prisoner spoke, answering the broken German of his questioner in French far more pure.

"And what if I refuse, mon Capitaine?"

Captain Isabey's reply was a mute one. He merely motioned to the sergeant-major of his troop,

Digitized by Google

who dismounting threw the bridle of his horse to his right hand man, and as he advanced leisurely, cocked his short carbine, while he took his station beside the prisoner.

"Monsieur is a Frenchman, and shows the politeness inherent to the Grand Nation," muttered the prisoner through his clenched teeth. "I give the required promise, and will neither by word nor deed betray your route. Is that sufficient?"

"It is," replied Isabey, speaking in French, and replacing his pistol with one hand as he motioned to the dismounted trooper to mount; "but, Monsieur, we have no time to lose unless I wish to become your guest at Malegnano, and I have no desire the night's hospitality we have afforded you should be repaid us in kind. Bon voyage, camarade."

"Bon voyage, mon Capitaine," answered the Austrian; "in half an hour we shall meet again, and I will find means to be no longer your debtor for the night's lodgings. I was not alone in the maize last night, and I congratulate you on the success of your morning's raid."

The low sneering laugh was yet on his lips, as the sharp report of a pistol rang on the clear air, and the Austrian Uhlan stood motionless, his clear dark eye flashing, for he saw that he owed his life to the very man whom he had been seeking to irritate. Annoyed at their defeat, and goaded by the Austrian's taunt, one of the men had replied by a pistol shot, which as the distance separating them was but a few paces,

Digitized by Google

must have been fatal, had not Isabey knocked up the man's hand just as the hammer fell.

"For shame, Laurent, for shame," he said, "an unarmed man and a prisoner. I regret, monsieur, what has occurred, and will see that the act meets its due punishment. Forward, my lads, we have no time to lose," and at a sharp trot the troop passed on, taking their way towards the French lines, due eastward, but not before the low sneering laugh of the dismounted Uhlan rang round them as he answered, "Bon voyage, mon Capitaine, bon voyage. I'll take the punishment of that last act into my own hands before half an hour is over. Au revoir, Messieurs les Français."

The trot became a canter soon, until the hill side reduced it to a walk. Once that ridge of hill surmounted, and the long plain over which, though probably not within view, the French advance was moving, would lie before them. Leaving his subaltern in command, Isabey called upon his horse and gained the brow of the hill about a hundred yards in front of his men. Before him lay the long plain, the blue smoke in the distance telling him of the whereabouts of the French army, while not half a mile in his front a regiment of Austrian hussars were moving over the plain between him and the distant French lines. Turning in his saddle he motioned to his subaltern. His troop was halted, covered by the brow of the hill, but at that moment the white jackets of a Croat regiment of Austrian infantry debouched

Digitized by Google

from the maize fields in his rear, and a puff of white smoke, followed by a loud report, showed him that he was cut off, both from advance and retreat. The Austrian prisoner had spoken truly when he said he had not been alone, a corporal of his out-picquet was with him at the time, but sending the man back, he had waited the result, when Isabey's unexpected coming, and the subsequent struggle so nearly resulting in his death occurred. The man who had been sent back had received orders to wait his officer's return, first directing the outpost to mount and call in the advanced videttes silently and with precaution. Should they not be joined by their officer one hour before daybreak, they were to retire on Malegnano, reporting the near approach of the French and his own capture, while endeavouring to gain information. That last event had taken place, but as he lay guarded and pinioned on the trodden maize, the clear starlight shining over his torn and wet uniform, and his dirt-begrimed face—as he lay there on his back, unable to move, wounded, wet and weary—he rejoiced, for he knew his orders would be obeyed; and that not only would the morning expedition be fruitless, but the French troops he thought would never rejoin their comrades.

Sullen and revengeful he lay the long night, thinking only of his revenge, and the pistol shot which so nearly ended his life was but another item added to the same account.

Bitterly regretting his mistake, Isabey remained

Digitized by Google

for a moment undecided; but there was no time for hesitation, for a second white cloud, this time from the far left, was quickly followed by a loud report, and a large white mark on the rocks close to him showed that the Austrian light artillery was not to be trifled with. The bugles of the infantry were heard, as the men trampled heavily in loose files through the Indian corn. Backing his horse, he rejoined his men, who were just covered by the ridge of hill.

"My lads," he said, turning in his saddle, "before us lies an Austrian regiment; behind us an Austrian brigade. We have but one course: forward! and if one man lives to reach our lines, the report of that one man will be enough. Now, forward!"

The men were veterans, and were well mounted. Every private was a picked man—tried and hardened under the Algerian climate. Their horses, too, were fiery Arabs, and in top condition. The loud word of command to form line, as the troop cleared the hill and debouched on to the plain, gave the first notice of their approach; while the enemy—a splendid Austrian regiment of lancers, the rich uniforms and the points of their long lances glittering in the sunlight—seemed hardly to be prepared for them. They had heard the light guns open fire, and supposed the whole affair over; but the long lance-points came at once down to the charge as their foe appeared. Among the French every man drew a long breath, as at the trot they neared their enemy. Isabey,

Digitized by Google

tightening his bridle rein and shaking himself firmly into his saddle, glanced back at his troop, which he was leading to sure death. Perhaps a thought of his home, and of the lady taking her way up the forest glades to the quiet little chapel beneath the oaks, came over him at that moment. Perhaps a thought, too, of the "Good Ladie" and her traditional intercession recurred to him, as his eye glanced over the long line of bright-headed lances, with their little fluttering flags which awaited him. Be that as it may, the word of command was given; the spurs were buried in the flanks of the fiery little Arabs, while the savage shout of a Croat regiment of infantry, as the long line of glittering bayonets topped the hill in their rear, came down to them upon the wind. Forward at mad speed went the little troop, hurling itself on the advancing Austrians. One moment the loud shout "Vive l'Empereur!" rang on the air, as the two lines met, the Austrian hussars fairly doubling over and outflanking the French. The next, all was confusion, flashing sabres, noise, and dust. Not a shot was fired on either side, but the bright sabres rose and flashed among the glittering lance-heads. The loud cheers of the advancing infantry, who were now moving forward at the double, and the ring of the guns as they rattled over the plain, were added to the tumult, while now and then from the heaving, seething mass came the loud shriek of pain or the wild cry of revenge, and masterless horses dashed from the crowd to

Digitized by Google

scour unheeded over the plain. But soon, with a wild shout, the little Arab horses emerge from the deadly *mêlée*, in wild confusion, it is true, and sadly diminished as to numbers. No longer in line now, but dashing on just as they could, while the pattering fire of the infantry, and the heavy thud of the field pieces followed the small remnant of the flying troop. The Austrians never attempted to pursue, for no object was to be gained thereby. The French advance was known to be near. The presence of Isabey's small troop made them think it nearer than it really was; and, not wishing to bring on a more important affair, the Austrian commandant retired on Malegnano.

Isabey's troop soon reformed; but some fifteen saddles were emptied, while more than double that number of black spots on the plain in rear of them showed that those empty saddles had not been unrevenged. Many of the horses were bleeding too, and several loose ones had followed, the well-trained Arabs taking their places among their comrades, though the hand which guided their movements five minutes before formed part now of one of those black blotches on the plain, which grew less and less as the diminished troop rode on. The man who had fired at the Uhlan prisoner was missing. He had fallen close to his captain, just as the latter, while ridding himself of an enemy by a sabre cut, received a severe wound in the thigh from a lance. Two hours later the men and horses, thoroughly wearied

Digitized by Google

out from fatigue, and many hardly able to keep their saddles from pain and loss of blood, reached the French lines.

That evening Captain Isabey, pale and wearied, was sent for. That night his name appeared in general orders, and the following day Malegnano was occupied by the French, after some unimportant skirmishing; and the forward movement was ordered which led, though unexpectedly, to the battle-field of Solferino, and the termination of a glorious campaign.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARTIST HOMES OF FOREST LAND.

WHILE scenes of blood and strife are desolating the fair plains of Italy—while a nation is struggling for independence, and France is staking the blood of her sons on the game—while the impoverished peasantry of Lombardy hail the star of freedom which is rising for them, though, as yet, dimmed by the clouds of war and battle—what is passing in the far away French homes, the memory of which often recurred to those whose lives were so freely risked in the cause of Italian freedom?

While Captain Isabey, sorely weakened by loss of blood consequent on the lance-thrust he has received, is seeking to revenge it, and is moving forward on the high road to Venice and the Adriatic, what is passing under the greenwood tree and among the oaks that sweep round the little woodland chapel of the "Good Ladie?" There is little changed here, and though the news of the success of the French arms is hailed with all a Frenchman's enthusiasm in the garrison town of Fontainebleau, though the tricolors stream from the windows, and the stereotyped illumination is to be seen at regular intervals,

Digitized by Google

marking the success which attends their army, yet old usages and old customs prevail, and the sweeping forest shuts in the old-fashioned ideas, and shuts out the noise of the screaming locomotive, and the rush of modern progress.

In days long since passed, before that same screaming locomotive had ever been heard in France, and but little in England, an old coach plied between Melun and Fontainebleau. It was the only mode of conveyance then, except by post, and that was only for the higher classes. It was always well filled; and summer and winter, as regularly as the sun rose and set, the old coach left Melun for Fontainebleau, at eight o'clock in the morning, returning at four the same evening. Years passed away, and the man who owned it passed away too; others followed him, and they too disappeared. Driver after driver occupied the seat, and at last the old coach itself tumbled to pieces, and was replaced by another, which served its time, and then gave place to its successor. Steam began to be talked of, and though the good old-fashioned people at first laughed at the idea, yet in course of time the iron rail was laid down, and the puffs of steam and the sound of the whistle rose above the trees of Bois le Roi. Any other coach would have now avowed itself vanquished, and, quietly depositing its antique carcase in some sequestered shed, would have slowly rotted; but the Fontainebleau coach was too strongly impregnated with the old-fashioned ideas of those who

Digitized by Google

used it to submit quietly to its fate, as any other would have done. A few old people yet remained, who had no faith in the rail, and who preferred jogging along after their own fashion to risking their lives on a railway. But even these died away gradually, and yet to this day the antiquated coach —constructed upon exactly the same principles as the first was made on—may be seen at its old, accustomed hours, an aged grey mare dragging the crazy vehicle slowly up the steep hill, leading past the "Ladie's Chapel" towards the Croix d'Augas, or bowling along at a jog-trot towards Melun. Madame Isabey sometimes takes advantage of it when her wreath is fading before the little altar, and she needs some of the wood anemones or orchids, which grow luxuriantly in the far away woods near the "Cabinet de Monseigneur," or the early violets on the top of the Hill of St. Louis; and then certainly the old crazy coach and the old horse that draws it are sorely scandalized, for the black Newfoundland, who evidently considers it a prime piece of fun, and not having the slightest respect for the antique, howls and barks in gladness, as he jumps at the horse's nose or capers among the old stones and crumbling remains on St. Louis's Hill. They are pleasant enough these rambles under the trees of the forest; and as the spring merges into summer, and each week brings cheering news from the army in Italy, who enjoys them more than Madame Isabey? There are two events which have occurred to en-

Digitized by Google

liven a life which might otherwise have proved monotonous.

A new life has been revealed—a new hope has sprung up in the heart of Madame Isabey. The hope has merged into certainty, and yet she scruples to share with her absent husband that assurance which would cheer up the soldier's rough life, and light up his canvas home in a far-away land. And as she rambles among the glades and drives, Madame Isabey has picked up an acquaintance; an old-fashioned one, it is true, every way worthy to take his place in the old Fontainebleau coach, and yet one well known and much esteemed.

Walking slowly along the sunny side of the street, somewhat bent with age, and his queerly-cut clothes and broad-brimmed felt hat telling of years gone by, and of old-fashioned tailors long since deceased, an old, kind-looking, grey-haired man may be seen. Every one bows to him as he passes on towards the forest; for Dennecourt's name is closely connected with the forest itself. As a boy he had rambled there—his earliest recollections were associated with its oaks and beeches, its dells and dingles, and when old enough to form any aim in life, it always was his boyhood's dream of happiness to spend his days in the forest, and to live and die there. But when Dennecourt was a lad, the wars of the first Empire were raging, and the Emperor Napoleon had not any great sympathy with dreamers. Torn from his beloved forest, the lad, now become a young man,

Digitized by Google

served with some distinction, until the Emperor and his ambitious schemes and hopes were buried for ever. Dennecourt then returned to his forest life, and his simple, frugal habits enabling him to live far within the little income he had inherited, he set to work to realise his boyhood's dreams. And now he has converted Madame Isabey, and the two actually spend a great part of their life in the old forest, very much to the satisfaction of the black Newfoundland.

Years had passed over Dennecourt's head during his daily search after the picturesque, and left him still at his task. By degrees he began to look on the old forest as his own, and though he mapped and marked it out, placing a blue arrow to guide the stranger to the forest beauties he had found and opened out, yet he began to talk of all these as his discoveries, as his creations, and was as happy in them as Columbus when ranking as the discoverer of a new world. Years had slipped by unheeded, literally spent in the forest, and the silver threads were becoming predominant among the formerly black locks, warning Dennecourt that his youth had passed away. Still his self-sought mission had been fulfilled. Everywhere he had laid open the forest; east and west, north and south, his blue arrows served to guide others to the spots he himself loved best; seats were placed here and there; caverns and grottoes found or made; fine old trees grown up bristled with underwood, were opened out,

Digitized by Google

and legends and tales long forgotten collected together, and rescued from oblivion.

Some twelve months before the date of our tale, when wandering one day disconsolately enough through his forest dream-land, he stumbled upon a ridge of time-worn rocks. The view from the summit of the ridge was unequalled, and Dennecourt sat on the ridge and dreamed one of his forest dreams. A broad flight of steps led from the ridge of rock, conducting the visitor to the summit of a stone tower. A sweeping drive was before him, a forest drive, winding in and out among the trees leading to those steps. He passed along it, and knew by name every tree, and every rock that road led by; he mounted the steps of the tower, and standing on its battlements, looked over the waving tree-tops, now far below him; over the green forest, which lay like a carpet beneath, away over the open country, dotted by many a town and village. He saw the lazy Seine winding sluggishly in and out. He looked down on Melun, and away to the dull fields round Paris. The neighbouring forest of Champagne, and the little white-walled village of Thomery, with its rich vineyards, even the far-off towers of old Sens cathedral, were visible to the old man's eye as he sat on the bare ledge of grey rock.

But the dream faded; the shrill scream of the locomotive as it puffed and whistled, throwing the white vapour in little detached clouds above the tops

Digitized by Google

of the trees in the "King's Wood," woke him, recalling the dreamer from dreamland, and he remembered that he had no means.

He had spent all on his beloved forest, and the forest returned nothing. And so the "Fort de l'Empereur," as Dennecourt had named his imaginary view, became a fixed and unchangeable idea in the old man's brain. Renouncing for a time his wanderings, he went home, bought himself a pair of spectacles, and page by page wrote out his Forest Guide. It is yet the best extant; and Dennecourt hoped by its help to get friends and build the "Fort de l'Empereur." But the forest was obstinate; and though Dennecourt's works and Dennecourt's Guide became known, the money which poured into the pockets of the hotel-keepers guides, and car-owners of the place, did not help him. Every day, now that the Guide was printed and advertised for sale, the old man sat on the bare ridge of rocks, and dreamed dreams of the glories of "Fort de l'Empereur;" and it was here the black Newfoundland found him one day; and it was here Madame Isabey first listened to the dreamer's hopes and fears, and entered into his life.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

THE ARTIST HOMES OF FOREST LAND.

LADIES have devoted themselves to many curious pursuits; and when the members of the gentle sex do once get a fixed idea into their heads, nothing ever stays or delays its execution. We have every day instances of this; in our own land Miss Nightingale formed one such an example, among hundreds of others less known, but equally meritorious. On the Continent the Sister of Mercy is as a household word; and though the idea which had been born in Madame Isabey's mind was one of no real usefulness or importance, it originated in kindness and sympathy with the old man's feelings as he sat on his bare ledge of rock and told his forest dream. Madame Isabey saw no difficulties, could see none, and with her new-born hope lighting up her soul, she went on her way endeavouring to realise the old man's dream; and her determined wanderings in search of the means required, led her and the black Newfoundland to many a strange place connected with the old forest.

There is one class of visitors who unwillingly helped to realise Dennecourt's dreams, among whom

Digitized by Google

the lady and her dog were well known in those days, and who generally held both Dennecourt and his creations in supreme contempt. Two villages on the borders of the forest are the special homes of the wandering artists. Marlotte, on the one hand, pours its summer hordes of wild banditti-looking beings over the heights of Bouron, with its magnificent views of the adjoining plains of Nemours and Montargis. Close by lies the wild scenery of "The Wolf's Gorge" and the romantic plateau, with its little lake, called "The Fairy's Lake." The "Long Rocher," too, with its mighty rocks piled one on the other, twisted and split into fantastic forms, amidst which little patches of grass, where the solitary deer love to graze, peep out here and there. All these tempt many a wandering artist to fix his temporary home at Marlotte. But after all, the village is only looked upon as a second-rate one, the real artist gathering being yearly held at the opposite extremity of the forest, where the little village of Barbizon is built. Here the magnificent oaks and beeches of the "Gros Fouteau," and of the "Bas Breau," the wild arid sands of Arbonne, and the rocky passes of the "Hautes Bornes," each in their turn tempt the seeker after the beautiful to the long straggling street just outside the forest, whose little houses compose the village of Barbizon; and accordingly, down that street, leading to the forest entrance, many a strange figure, uncouthly dressed, and with the traditional white umbrella camp-stool and artist's box,

Digitized by Google

passes every year. But there is one house at Barbizon, beneath whose roof none but the wandering artists sojourn, but which has been from time immemorial their home. Its walls are covered with painting and sketches of all sorts. To some of these the initials of men whose names have become as landmarks to guide the artist's hopes and aspirations, are affixed, and here the humble seeker after fame may see executed, by hands now long since mouldering in the grave, but whose names yet head the roll of artistic fame, scraps and bits painted by those who have passed away—when they, too, were nameless wandering artists, long, long ago.

While Dennecourt dreamed on his bare rock, and the enthusiast who sought by her efforts to realise the dream, moved among the artist homes of the forest, the little inn at Barbizon was in full glory. Its wild, uncouth, but light-hearted visitors, were ruled over with a rod of iron, for old Father Ganne, as the village landlord was called, then held sway in the far-famed little hostelry of Barbizon. For more than half a century had he ruled there; his utter simplicity and childlike knowledge of the world rendering him dear to the mirth-loving crew who flocked yearly to the little inn. Many a well-appointed carriage now pulls up at old Père Ganne's door; and when in his merry moods, the old man would tell of the tricks and deceptions played off on him by his laughter-loving guests with great zest. Old Père Ganne eventually entered into Dennecourt's

Digitized by Google

scheme, heart and soul, and insisted on a subscription from each of his guests, without a promise of which no one was received at the little inn. And, to their honour be it said, the poor artists kept their word, one and all, though they had no sympathy with Dennecourt and his brick and mortar dreams. How this happened was one of the tales old Père Ganne liked least of all to tell, and though, generally, none laughed louder than he did, even when the point of the tale told against himself, yet he never quite forgot the joke which led to the more serious matter-of-fact fine, inflicted in the shape of a subscription to Dennecourt's dream.

A party of young artists, just arrived from Paris, had taken up their abode with hospitable old Père Ganne. Knowing the scantiness of his bill of fare, which he would not have varied had the emperor been present, these new comers had organized a weekly parcel from Paris. When the first of these weekly contributions to their larder came to hand, it contained, among other delicacies dear to the artists, some lobsters; but old Père Ganne had never seen a lobster, and it was well known that he would not admit of any culinary innovations. One of the party, however, got over the difficulty by returning with a few shell-fish from a forest walk, declaring he had found them among the rocks of the "Hautes Bornes." So seriously was the tale told, so simple was the old man's child-like faith, that the tabooed lobsters appeared at supper.

Digitized by Google

The old man always headed the table at supper-time. His father had done so before him, and his grandfather before that; and old as he was, his grey hair and good-humoured florid face seemed to incite, not stay the wild mirth of the half-mad crew. This time the "Père Ganne" took kindly to the forest lobsters; so much so, that sundry old cobwebbed bottles made their appearance, in consideration for which the old man was told where the shell-fish had been found. Early morning saw him on his way to the spot indicated; and, to the honour of the rough jokers be it known, that he often found the much-loved shell-fish. It is needless to say how they came among the rocks and sands of the forest; but they did do so, and regularly appeared at the late supper, generally bringing in their train sundry of the much-loved cobwebbed bottles. How long this might have lasted was never known; but one day, when engaged in a fruitless search—for there had been no parcel from Paris that day—Père Ganne pushed his wanderings further than usual, and, by chance, fell in with Dennecourt and Madame Isabey. The tale was told amid loud and uncontrollable laughter, and the old man was made aware of the trick played on him. By degrees Dennecourt calmed him; and when he arrived at Barbizon, he had forgotten his anger, remembering only the joke against his own simple nature; but never again, during the old man's lifetime, did a lobster appear on the supper-table, and the cobwebbed bottles saw the light no

Digitized by Google

more, for many a day at least, while the little auberge, as a penalty, contributed its quota to the realization of the dreamers' dream.

Poor old Père Ganne is dead. He passed away quietly and simply, as he lived, surrounded to the last by those he loved best—the wild, light-hearted artists. The old rooms are still to be seen covered with their pictures, and the tale of the forest-lobsters has become a tradition and a by-word; but many who frequented the little inn, and were then just com mencing a long career, have since achieved success; and Barbizon, its forest and its quiet ways, has become endeared to them. Houses and studios have risen there, and the long, straggling street has grown longer and less straggling.

The artists have formed themselves into a kind of community at Fontainebleau; and from being simple visitors to the old forest, have come to consider themselves as part proprietors, and to arrogate rights and privileges to themselves. Some of these have been conceded to them; and certain parts of the forest, where some of the noblest trees grow, are specially consecrated to them, the old forest giants being allowed to rot where they stand in picturesque old age, rather than that they should be removed, and thus certain parts of the forest yet retain their old wildness. Formerly bands of artists actually made the forest their home, leading a Robin Hood kind of life, and laying the land under contribution for their living.

Digitized by Google

In one of his forest rambles Dennecourt fell in with a specimen of these gipsy artists, and both he and Madame Isabey long remembered the meeting with pleasure. It is, perhaps, the last instance which will ever occur of such a vagabond life being led so near to such a centre of civilization as Paris. Some years before the date of our tale an artillery officer, a native of Holland, renouncing his profession, turned his attention to painting, for which he had, or fancied he had, a great talent. Without any fortune, and quite unknown, chance led him to Fontainebleau, and there, becoming acquainted with Dennecourt, he seemed to have learned from him to love the forest solitudes. That same chance led an Englishman to the same spot. This latter was of a wild, roving, unsettled spirit. He had lived long in France; had fought with the people on their barricades — he hardly knew why, and now caught eagerly at the idea of a forest life.

A proper spot was soon found among the rocks of the Hautes Bornes. A cavern was discovered there deep and commodious; and there the two artists, the one from Holland, the other from England, made their home. Piles of fresh fern and sweet broom were to be had daily for the gathering, a cask of light wine was bought from Père Ganne, and with these limited means the two began housekeeping. Wood they could find in plenty, but they never took any near their forest-home, for fear the abstraction should be noticed, and their whereabouts betrayed. A few

Digitized by Google

snares and traps kept their larder supplied, and now and then a stray deer fell in their way, and then their fire burned merrily. Winter and summer, for two years they lived thus, working at their art by day and retiring to their rude cavern by night, so that it was only when the wine-cask ran low, or the tobacco-pouch was empty, that they were seen in the neighbouring village. After two years had passed the Englishman was called away, and he died soon after of consumption, most likely brought on by the vicissitudes of his forest life. The other, a man of iron nerves and herculean frame, still lived this strange life, and it was only by a curious chance that it was brought to a close.

Two years of such an existence did not improve, as may be well imagined, a toilet not very *recherché* at the outset. Two mounted gendarmes, riding leisurely through the forest one day, fell in with this strange figure. His trousers had been cut away just above the knee for convenience' sake; his hair, beard, and moustache were long and uncared for; the apology of a hat he wore was battered and without a brim. A tattered blouse covered his powerful chest, showing through many a rent and tear the want of linen beneath. In his hand he carried a long iron-shod pole, intended to support his umbrella when working; and not recognising an ex-Captain of the Queen of Holland's artillery in such a guise, the gendarmes arrested him. Between his two captors this strange figure was marched through the forest,

Digitized by Google

up the broad high street to the barracks of the police, where he was eventually lodged (not having papers to show in proof of his identity,) in a room, to await the coming of the head of the police. He was perfectly well known to this functionary, who had often tried to reclaim him from this useless and wild mode of life; and by some chance, the wife of the absent captain of gendarmerie happened that morning to enter the strange prisoner's room, and the vagabond artist was soon seated at her breakfast-table, so that the gendarmes, coming in to make their report, stared with surprise to find the disreputable, suspicious character they had arrested that morning, and who they conceived to be at least a returned convict, quietly breakfasting, on a perfect equality, in spite of rags and wretchedness, with their superior officer and his wife. The artist renounced from that day his wandering life, but even yet remembers those two years of wild, half-savage liberty with pleasure; and few who look upon his magnificent pictures of forest and animal life, suspect how and where the painter acquired that knowledge and truthfulness of touch all see and admire in his works.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

MALEGNANO.

SPRING had merged into summer, and the rich plains of Lombardy lay seething and baking beneath the rays of the hot sun of Italy. Milan had received the conquerors, throwing wide her gates for their entrance. Festivals and rejoicings of all kinds were on foot, and yet the work of war did not languish. The morning after the return of Captain Isabey's reconnaissance, three divisions of the French marched out of Milan. The bugles and trumpets of Marshal Baraguay D'Hillier's corps rang merrily on the morning air, as cavalry, artillery, and infantry moved out on the high road to Lodi. The Austrians were now known to be in force at Malegnano, and from the circumstance of a regular chain of out-picquets existing, on one of which Captain Isabey had fallen providentially, it was conjectured that it was the Austrian rear guard which occupied the town of Malegnano, having doubtless strongly fortified it. Three divisions were in motion under the Marshal's immediate command. Captain Isabey, whose knowledge of the country though slight might be valuable, had been released from the command of his troop, and placed

Digitized by Google

at the disposal of the Marshal. The long plain over which they moved was hot and dusty, and some hours elapsed before the three divisions reached the little hut, from which the white houses and bridge of Malegnano could be distinctly seen. The French dead of the day before had been left where they fell, and as the troops halted by the little hut, a fatigue party was detached to give Isabey's fallen troopers a soldier's grave.

The halt was short, and in order of battle the three columns moved on towards the town, the silence and stillness of which would have led any casual spectator to believe it deserted. In front of the left division, the 15th regiment of the line and the 10th Chasseurs were thrown out as skirmishers, while the right moved up the dusty dry road leading from Magenta, and down which Captain Isabey had led his troop on the morning when he attempted to surprise the Austrian out-picquet.

The 1st regiment of Zouaves covered the advance of the centre column, with whom Marshal Baraguay d'Hilliers remained.

There was no sign of an enemy, and so still and calm was the whole scene, that had it not been for Captain Isabey's certainty as to the position of the Austrian rear-guard, the Marshal would have hardly realized the fact of that rear-guard being so near him.

The French advance was now close to the little town. Before them lay a small bridge crossing the

Digitized by Google

river Lambro; and had an enemy occupied the town, the bridge over the river would surely have been broken down, and yet there it was untouched. It was strange, and as the division of General Bazaine neared the little bridge, Captain Isabey received orders for the colonel of the 1st Zouaves. A small artillery force accompanied him, halting after crossing the bridge, and unlimbering, opened fire on the first buildings of the place. Still there was no reply—no sign of an enemy, as the 1st Zouaves moving forward no longer as skirmishers, received the orders Isabey carried to advance and storm the place, while the clouds of dust from the falling buildings amply testified to the accuracy of the guns. Just outside the town of Malegnano, lies a little cemetery. It is a peaceful little spot enough, well filled with graves. Not formal, dark-looking memorials of the dead, such as are to be met with in a more northern climate, but little light-looking tombs, hung round with the wreaths and flowers placed there by the living. A high wall surrounds the grave-yard, and massive iron gates alone give entrance. Near the cemetery stood a large farmhouse, and a few paces further on the houses of the town; one of the first buildings of which was a large square edifice, whose windows were strongly barred and grated, and whose walls were pierced with loop-holes for musketry. This house was moated, although the water at this season of the year being low, the moat was dry or nearly so, and it had been used by the Austrians as a military prison.

Digitized by Google

A causeway led across the moat, and strong iron gates forbade entrance. The fire of the French artillery was principally directed against the walls of the prison, and though very effective, no reply was made to it. The 1st Zouaves, moving steadily forward, neared the little graveyard; when suddenly, with a fierce yell, a tremendous fire was poured into their ranks. Staggering for an instant under the unexpected attack, the next saw the Zouaves dashing forward, but the loop-holes of the old prison were now one blaze of light as the Austrian riflemen made up for their long period of silence by a concentrated and terrible fire. From some little earthworks, which flanked the French position, a murderous fire was also poured in; and in an instant that silence which had been broken only by the march of the French divisions, echoed to the thunder of the guns and the sharp roll of the rifles. Stunned by the unexpected resistance, the Zouaves had for an instant hesitated. It was only an instant, for the next, with a loud ringing cheer, they rushed forward, but they were too late.

The 10th Chasseurs-à-pied, who had covered the advance to the left, had come up, and surging over the walls and into the graveyard, the bayonet and the clubbed musket did the rest. Those of the Austrians who could fled precipitately, and tearing down the benches and chairs piled against the walls, which had served the defenders of the cemetery to fire from, the Zouaves and the 10th pursued them. The

Digitized by Google

fire from the farmhouse checked for a moment the advance, but the fierce flames were soon rising from the farm buildings, and onwards into the streets of Malegnano pressed the victorious French. The prison was hotly contested, and tremendous slaughter ensued. Moving over the causeway, the Zouaves were mowed down by the Austrian fire, but the 3rd regiment of the line and the 15th coming up, the gates were carried, and again the deadly bayonet and the clubbed musket did their work. The Austrians in the place were now fighting in one compact mass, and fighting too with the hopeless desperation of brave but beaten men, for the whole Austrian rear-guard was in full retreat, and the stand made at Malegnano was but to cover that retreat. The right division of Marshal Baraguay d'Hilliers' force, under General Forey, which had moved up the road from Magenta, had now overlapped the first houses of Malegnano, and there was therefore no retreat for the doomed Austrian force which had so gallantly defended the old prison. Their only chance of safety had lain in gaining the open fields, and the division of General Forey was rapidly moving forward over that very ground.

The whole town of Malegnano was one blaze of fire, every house being defended to the last; and as house after house was carried, the infuriated men neither gave nor were asked for quarter. The Austrian force in Malegnano was doomed, for Forey's brigade was now between them and their own people,

Digitized by Google

and yet they fought on gallantly, but with the courage of despair. Finding himself with the Zouaves at the moment they received the fire from the cemetery, Isabey had remained with them. He had been among the first to pass over the causeway leading into the old prison, and he now cheered forward his men as they almost recoiled before the desperate defence opposed to them.

Suddenly the Austrians gave way, and springing forward, Isabey and his men followed; a scene of slaughter ensuing which marked the affair of Malegnano as one of the bloodiest of the campaign. A double gateway, opening on the causeway crossing the moat led to the fields beyond, and along this the Austrians fled. A party of five men had turned after passing these gates, and were labouring hard to close them against their pursuers.

At the moment Isabey neared them, the iron gates were actually moving on their hinges; in another, they would be shut and the fugitives safe. Madly he sprang forward, but it was too late; for as the heavy iron gates slammed together with a loud noise which sounded like thunder on his ears, the sneering laugh of the officer who had commanded the closing of the gates, and thus shut in the victorious Zouaves who now were tugging and driving at the locked bars, rang upon his ears, and he once more recognised the dark eyes and torn uniform of his late prisoner.

Few of the fugitives eventually escaped, for, though the closing of the iron gates was a gallant and success-

Digitized by Google

ful act, effectually preventing pursuit from those who had carried the building, yet General Forey's division had cut off retreat, and the carnage was awful. That night, when the French advance bivouacked near Malegnano, four thousand dead and wounded lay in and about the place, the remains of the Austrian force which had held the town on the day when Captain Isabey had pushed his reconnaissance so close; and one thousand prisoners, with one gun, fell into the hands of General Forey's division, and were marched at once to the rear. The old prison, where the Zouaves had fought hand to hand with their opponents, was a perfect shambles; and the open country in its rear, over which the survivors had passed in their hurried flight, was thickly covered with dead. That night, when the quiet stars shone forth, Isabey wandered forth over the field. A fatigue party, detailed from different regiments, had been sent out and broken into small parties: their lanterns dotted the plain, and the noise of the spades and picks, as they did their work, broke on the night. He had felt some curiosity to see whether his late prisoner had fallen; but it was a curiosity not to be satisfied, for he could find no trace of him on the field, though as many of the Austrian dead were buried before his arrival—he could not be sure. A large pit was dug near the prison, and the dead were placed in it; silence succeeding to the roar of the engagement and the thunder of the guns. The broken and disfigured houses slept calmly in the

Digitized by Google

starlight, while every now and then a sharp report far away to the front, or a blaze of light on the horizon, showed that the French cavalry were not idle, and that they still hung upon the retreat of the Austrian rear-guard, which the sanguinary affair of that day had made a very precipitate one.

The following morning Isabey received orders to rejoin his regiment, and resume the command of his troop, which had been sent to the front with the cavalry brigade to harass the Austrian rear. It was nearly midsummer now, and the country through which he passed no longer presented the same appearance as that through which the army had so lately marched. Passing over the river Lambro (just after sunrise), which he was obliged to ford, the bridge having been destroyed by the retiring Austrian rear-guard, his road led along the banks of a deep canal, through a rich plain, plentifully irrigated by streams of running water. There were no maize or corn fields, but the plain stretched far away before him, cut here and there by ditches bordered with straggling willows, the fields being almost wholly pasture land. Over this plain the Austrian army had passed after evacuating Milan, leaving only the rear-guard with orders to hold the strong post of Malegnano to the last, and then fall back as best it could on the main body. Little villages dotted the plain, and in some of these, desperate fighting had taken place, and the dead yet lay unburied. Some were fired, and the ruins were still smoking, while

Digitized by Google

far away the low rumble, as of distant thunder, and the sudden column of smoke and flame spurting out on the horizon, showed how rapidly General Forey's division had followed the retreating force. The face of the Uhlan officer, as he lay on the ground in the maize during that long summer night, the stars shining on his pale forehead, came back to Isabey's memory from time to time; and the same face, begrimed with blood and smoke, as his former prisoner worked with voice and hand to close the iron gates of the old prison, returned to him. He could not help wondering whether the man had escaped. Not that it mattered to him, nor was it probable, but his sullen, determined obstinacy when a prisoner, and the cool daring which had led him to stop in that hour of sore danger and close the ponderous gates leading to the ruined causeway, thus risking his own life, to prevent pursuit, in the face of the excited Zouaves, had pleased him. In one village through which he passed, the traces of a severe struggle yet remained. It was past mid-day, and the lines of the cavalry of the guard were before him, not three miles distant, when he reached this village, which had evidently been rudely barricaded and obstinately defended. Isabey dismounted from his horse in the courtyard of what had a few hours before been a flourishing inn, and leading him by the bridle, walked through the village with the face of the Austrian Uhlan still vividly before him, half expecting to find the reality among the dead so plentifully

Digitized by Google

strewed around. It was a sad sight, the houses with their broken doors and smashed windows, the interiors completely gutted, and the rich furniture tumbled into the streets to serve as barricades. Some of the houses had been fired, and the smoke and flames were busy at work as the soldier passed up the street. The Chasseurs d'Afrique had ridden down it before him, and it was evident the place had been shelled. The bodies lay thickly piled near the first barricade, just as they had fallen. Close to it, but apart from the heap, the corpse of a Bohemian officer was thrown. From his richly laced uniform it was evident he had been in command, but a shell had finished his career; and, as he lay there, the top of his skull literally blown to pieces, a large gaunt dog was licking up the blood and brains which besmeared the stones around him. Near him lay the bodies of two boys, wearing the white uniform of the Austrian line. They were both dead, hand clasped in hand, and had doubtless been friends in life—perhaps dying as each called up the remembrance of the same far-away village, or perhaps of the same family and parents. Here, leaning against the shattered barricade, lay a rifleman, his dead figure yet clutching his rifle, and the cartridge ready in his hand, which he was never doomed to fire. Further down the street the deadly sabres of the Chasseurs d'Afrique had done their work, and death was there in every shape. Some pigs broken loose from their styes were prowling unheeded among the dead, pushing and poking about

Digitized by Google

among the shattered remains, as Isabey, once more mounting, took his way down the street; and the loud, cheering bugle-notes of Forey's division were never more heartily welcome to him than they were as he rode down the lines of the cavalry brigade, and rejoined his own corps.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

SAN MARTINO.

THE Austrian rear-guard had rejoined the main body, the first division of which was commanded by General Wimpfen, the second under that of Count Schlick. The French advance had pushed on to Medole, and, halting there, the whole French army had gradually closed on it, the head-quarters being established at Castiglione delle Stiviere. Here, at last, a desperate stand was to be made, and as the Austrians had the choice of the ground, they naturally selected that most favourable for the action of their favourite arm, the cavalry.

This battle-field resembled more the chosen and prepared lists for a tournament. Two Emperors had entered those lists, and around them were massed two of the finest armies their respective countries could produce, commanded by the greatest generals of the day. The first Austrian division held Guidizzolo and Goito; the second or extreme right rested on Pezzolongo, holding the village of Cavriana and the high road from San Cassiano to Volta. The position round the village of Solferino was held by the 4th division, commanded by the brave Count

Digitized by Google

Stadion. The Austrian force had before them a long plain, cut by high roads in different directions, and this long flat plain, broken only by trees and brushwood, known by the name of the Campo di Medola, was overlooked by a small square tower, known by the name of La Spia d'Italia. Near the tower lies the little village of Solferino, now famous in history, and at a little distance, after traversing a pleasant valley, the road leads to another village named Cavriana. The broad plain lies beyond, dotted by many villages, their white houses peeping out among the trees, and the long lines of the straight roads running across it in every direction. The weather was hot and sultry, and the cavalry especially had been hard worked. The Chasseurs, to which Captain Isabey belonged, had been out all day, returning on the evening of the 23rd June from a foraging expedition, which had been singularly unfortunate in its results, to find an order waiting their return to camp, directing the whole corps to move on Castiglione, which they were to reach next day by daylight. Tired and weary, Isabey entered his tent to find there letters from France, and now at last the hopes which had brightened his wife's forest walks, and cheered her during her husband's absence, were known to him. The night was clear and oppressively hot; heavy clouds hung on the horizon, massing themselves on the hills where the French left lay, towards Lonata and Solferino; but the stars were shining brightly, and the air was so still, that, as he stood at

Digitized by Google

the entrance of the little tent, with the letter telling of the hope which his young wife had at last shared with him in his hand, his heart beat fast. His eyes glanced over the range of hills overlooking the Mincio, and over the beautiful plain stretching away southward from the heights of Castiglione, lighted up by the twinkling stars. Far away, invisible to the gaze, was the town of Verona, and all around, the silence of the night throwing its mantle over them, lay encamped the massed divisions of the French army, whose aim was the capture of Verona. Between them and the town, with the beautiful plain alone separating them, lay the Austrian army, commanded by their Emperor, barring the onward way; and as Isabey turned to enter his tent, the twinkling lights of Castiglione, where the French Emperor had established his headquarters, struck his eye. There was an unusual movement there, and one which doubtless was soon to vibrate through the whole army. Isabey felt, despite the quiet of the night, and the treacherous calm of the whole scene, that great events were near; and when, an hour after, his troop sergeant-major came with the orders that the regiment was to be in the saddle at three o'clock the following morning, he found him still sitting with the letter before him. Thoughts about his past life—of the young girl he had loved when, but a simple trooper in the ranks of the Chasseurs, he had first met her under the vines and olive-trees of her own sunny

Digitized by Google

Provence—came thickly around him. His upward career in life, as grade after grade was won by long and hard service, passed in review before him, and now he had won his way to the command of the very troop in which he had formerly served as private. The fair girl whom he had wooed and won had become his wife, was likely to become a mother, and before him lay Verona and the Austrian army. What might not the morrow bring forth! The sultriness of the night oppressed him, and the half darkness of the tent annoyed him. The face of the Austrian officer whom he had held captive came back to him mixed up with many another, and he thought of him as he lay in the maize clearing, with his limbs bound, and his pale blood-begrimed face turned steadily towards the stars; and so, hour after hour, the night wore on, hot and oppressive, and still the lights twinkled and moved in the direction of Castiglione. Three o'clock came at last, and found Isabey at the head of his troop on the road to head-quarters, each trooper carrying four days' provisions, and each horse two days' forage. Darkness was still hanging over the plain, but the tramp of the marching divisions, the rumbling of artillery, and the neighing of horses, told that an important and general movement was taking place. Day dawned heavily as the Chasseurs arrived within a mile of Castiglione, while hot puffs of wind came at intervals from the clouds massed on the hills towards Lonata. The trumpets of the cavalry sounded a halt, and the

Digitized by Google

regiment drew up to allow a marching division to pass to the front. Regiment after regiment moved on, the Chasseurs still remaining halted; and it was six o'clock on the 24th of June, when suddenly a rattling fire, gradually increasing in force, made itself heard; the heavy guns presently opening, adding their roar to the long increasing roll of the musketry.

One or two aide-de-camps, galloping to the rear, now passed them, and soon, throwing down their knapsacks the whole of the second division passed on towards the front at the double. Still the cavalry remained halted. Suddenly a mounted aide dashed up, horse and man both wounded. He was the bearer of a pressing message for the Piedmontese head-quarters, and was unable to proceed further, in consequence of which General Vinoy called upon Captain Isabey to carry out his orders. Five minutes later he was on his way towards Pezzolongo, and as he urged his horse onwards, the long roll of the musketry towards Peschiera told him his orders were anticipated, and the Piedmontese engaged. A sharp ride brought him to Pezzolongo, where, delivering his despatches to General Arnoldi, he received orders to wait a reply. The houses of San Martino lay before the little hill on which the Piedmontese general stood surrounded with his staff at the moment Isabey arrived, but the battle had already begun, and the position of San Martino was being, at that moment, obstinately contested.

Digitized by Google

Brigade after brigade of Piedmontese moved forward to the attack; the Austrian artillery, advantageously posted on the hill-side, sweeping down whole sections of men as they came on. Their shells were thrown with marvellous precision, and, as the white uniforms poured along the line of road from Peschiera to San Martino, it was evident the Piedmontese were sadly outnumbered. Hour after hour passed and the Austrians still held the place, while away towards Cavriana and Solferino the mingled roar of the musketry and artillery told of a prolonged and fierce fight.

It was nearly noon, and no progress had been made. San Martino still swarmed with the white uniforms, and the whole Piedmontese force was hotly engaged. General Arnoldi, struck by a splinter from an Austrian shell, just in the act of giving Isabey his orders, was mortally wounded, but two divisions were arriving as he rode away, and he was the bearer of positive assurance that the Piedmontese could not only hold their own, but, that before two hours the brave Bersaglieri, whose ranks were at that moment so dreadfully thinned, should hold the position of San Martino. A storm had burst as Isabey took his way back towards Castiglione, and flashes of vivid lightning were playing among the heavy masses of clouds which hung on the hill-tops, and away towards the Lake of Garda, and soon the ambulances almost blocked his way as, filled with wounded, they took their road to the rear. It was a

Digitized by Google

sorry sight as Isabey pressed forward, those heaps of wounded, dying, and dead, some silent, some moaning with pain as they vainly endeavoured to staunch the death-wound, others still labouring under the excitement of the fray, waving their powerless hands and shouting, "Long life to their King! Long life to their beloved Italy!" until they sank down bleeding and powerless on the ghastly heap. The tremendous roll of the artillery towards Solferino showed how fierce was the struggle going on in that direction, as striking into a cart-road Isabey turned his back on the Piedmontese position and pushed his way towards Castiglione. He moved forward slowly, for the wounded were coming in fast in large batches, and soon he and his horse were entangled in the dense columns of the Piedmontese Aqui Brigade, composed of the 17th and 18th of the line, who were moving forward at the double. A yell of vengeance broke from the leading files of the 17th as Isabey pressed on, and a small litter came up moving to the rear. It contained the bloody and mangled remains of a Piedmontese Bersaglieri officer, and the men of the Aqui Brigade broke their ranks as the litter passed, many of them kissing it as it was borne by, and then with loud shouts dashing forward towards San Martino, breathing dire imprecations and threats of vengeance. It was the body of the gallant Major Baretta, who had thrice that morning led the Bersaglieri to the attack of the mamelon of San Martino. Struck down by the Austrian fire, his men had given way, and

Digitized by Google

Baretta died, sword in hand, close to the houses of San Martino. The Aqui Brigade swore to avenge him, and they did, but it was nearly night, and after eleven hours' hard fighting, that the remnant of the Cunei and Aqui Brigades, by the light of the burning houses of San Martino, drove the mobbed mass of Austrians back on Peschiera, decimated and demoralized. The roar of the guns towards Solferino became louder and more incessant as Isabey pushed his way onwards, and as he neared Castiglione the line of road became almost impassable. Large tents filled with wounded and dying men were scattered thickly; the houses of Castiglione were crammed to suffocation, and still they poured in. At last the heights of Castiglione were gained, and the vast plain lay before Isabey, as he checked his horse on the brow of the hill to obtain some information from the excited mass of men rapidly passing him as to the position of the cavalry brigade. Below him a battery of Niel's artillery was shelling the Austrian centre, and away towards Pezzolengo clouds of dust and smoke, broken only by the flash of the batteries as the guns parted the smoke cloud, marked the line of fight. Along the plain large bodies of troops moved; their dark masses swaying to and fro, seemingly in inextricable confusion, while long, waving lines of men were seen to advance suddenly and disappear in the smoke wreaths. Heavy masses of infantry were arriving every moment, and as they arrived were hurled at once against the foe, while a little nearer to the spot his

Digitized by Google

eye could distinguish dark heaps, thickly strewing the ground, composed of dead men and horses, broken guns and smashed gun-carriages. The roar of the guns, the scream of the rockets, the bursting of the shells, which fell in a perfect hail-storm from the French artillery, mixed with the never ceasing roll of the musketry, crashed along the plain of Medole, as the long-contested tower of Solferino was won and lost, for the tower and village, which have since given their name to this battle, had already been carried more than once, and as often lost. Once the French grenadiers had carried them, and a fearful fight ensued; but step by step the 1st Austrian division, commanded by Count Clam in person, regained the lost ground, and drove the French grenadiers, with the bayonet, down the heights.

At length a mounted aide, galloping to the rear with orders, gave an answer, without pulling bridle, to Isabey's eager inquiries. Motioning with his hand he indicated the position of the Cavalry Brigade, shouting as he did so that there was bad news from General Niel's division. Following the direction thus vaguely obtained, now riding forward at speed, now hopelessly entangled among masses of advancing troops; ten minutes later Isabey, his horse breathless and panting, had delivered his verbal despatches to General Vinoy, and had received orders to rejoin his troop.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

SOLFERINO.

It was now nearly two o'clock, and the Austrian line remained unbroken on every point; but the artillery of the French had been reinforced; and formed, as the batteries were, in a crescent shape, the two horns rained a cross fire on the strong positions of Cavriana and Solferino, which rendered them almost untenable. Several French divisions had been massed together; and while the grenadiers received orders to carry the heights of Solferino with the bayonet, these regiments, by a flank movement, were to be hurled against the same position. The French cavalry had as yet remained idle, and the Austrian horse had hovered round the edge of the plain, also almost inactive; but at this moment the waving plumes of Mensdorff's brigade of cavalry swept over the plain, while the French guns at once opening on them, the attack of Solferino was delayed. The guns were forced to retire, as, utterly regardless of their deadly fire, Mensdorff's splendid regiments of cavalry dashed on towards them. It was a magnificent sight as these Austrian light cavalry corps swept towards the guns, which, while limbering up and retiring,

Digitized by Google

were protected by the infantry squares. A French Hussar regiment, moving across the plain to join the cavalry brigade, met them, and were ridden down and cut to pieces. A French square was broken, and suffered fearfully, but Mensdorff's cavalry could do no more; shattered and broken, they retired behind Schwartzenberg's divisions, just as the Chasseurs received orders to charge down on the Austrian infantry, and clear the road towards the foot of the heights on which the square tower of Solferino looked down on all the carnage. The cavalry had been formed into four brigades, and had long held in check the Austrian force of the same arm moving on the skirts of the little wood in front. The first line, composed of the Chasseurs d'Afrique and the 5th Hussars, had for support the 2nd regiment of the African Chasseurs; and it was these regiments received the orders to charge. The divisions destined to carry Solferino, which was the key of the Austrian position, were now well in hand, but General Niel's brigades were hard pressed, and the fate of the day was still to be determined. Forward went the cavalry line—forward towards the dusty, smoke-covered plain, and soon the long line was lost to the view of their comrades on the hill-side.

It was a mad charge, as at top speed, their horses well in hand, the cavalry moved over the plain, the Austrian artillery playing fiercely on their ranks, the French cavalry on one side, and the Austrian on the other, spectators of the fight. Then, amidst a cloud

Digitized by Google

of dust, smoke, and glancing flame, their battle cry of "Vive l'Empereur," resounding over the din of the affray and the roar of the guns, the Chasseurs swept on maddened by excitement. The guns tore up their ranks, the hissing rockets fell among them, and the file-firing of the Austrian squares swept them away. Still, fearing nothing, caring for nothing, they dashed on, sabreing as they went, and horses and men mad with furious excitement, while the smoke and dust closed round them, hiding their advance from the eyes of their comrades. At this moment the din of battle grew louder, for the already-massed French divisions were hurled, by a flank movement, against Solferino, while, at the double, the Grenadiers attacked it in front, carrying, and this time holding, the place, but mercilessly bayoneting right and left. The whole Piedmontese force falling on the Austrian right, drove back Benedek's corps, and gradually forced them to the rear, obstinately contesting every yard of ground, towards Mosambano, while, beaten along the whole line, the Austrian army fell back. The charge of the Hussars and Chasseurs had been a desperate one, and though they had fulfilled their mission, the regiments were fearfully cut up and broken; and it was half-blind with the clouds of dust, and deafened with the roar of artillery and the pealing of the thunder, that Isabey, separated from his men, reined in his horse on the plain. The storm, which had long been playing along the mountain ridge, lighting up the

Digitized by Google

leaden-coloured waters of the lake of Garda, had burst over the Campo di Medole, and flash after flash of forked lightning, followed in quick succession by the pealing thunder, came mixed with the roll of musketry, the hiss of the rockets, the bursting shells, and the thunder of the guns. This furious storm, which greatly facilitated the Austrian retreat, swept in wild gusts over the plain, driving before it clouds of dust and smoke, and piling them on the already half-suffocated combatants. Still the infuriated regiments fought on, hardly able to know friend from foe as they did so. The Austrians were in retreat. Their Emperor had acknowledged the day as lost, and retired to Volta; while the heights of Solferino being carried, the French artillery advanced, and in concentrated masses poured a terrific fire into the Austrian divisions at Cavriana. Unwilling to lose this important position, the Austrian Emperor returned to the field, and by his own presence urged on his devoted army. All that men could do they did; but San Martino was now in flames, and the whole line falling back. The hail of French shells upon Cavriana was more than any men could endure; and at length, but not before a shell had burst over his head and wounded some of his staff, Francis Joseph turned his horse's head, and, accompanied by the Archdukes and the Grand Dukes of Tuscany and Modena, took his way to Vallegio, orders being given for the army to fall back on Mantua and Verona, a strong division

Digitized by Google

being left at Guidizzola, checking the French advances.

Hearing the cry, "Vive l'Empereur," Isabey, now hopelessly lost on the plain in the driving dust and smoke, tried to extricate himself. Urging with the spur his now wearied horse, he struggled on, as he supposed, in the right direction, but soon found himself wedged in among a dense mass of Croat infantry retiring from the field. Slowly he pressed on, parrying the blows aimed at him as best he could, and struggling through the dense mass. A deep bayonet-wound had scored the flanks of his horse; his own sword was broken at the guard, and nothing but the whirling dust and smoke saved him from a hundred death-wounds.

At length, how he knew not, he found himself comparatively free; and a glimpse, caught among the smoke clouds, of a white house told him he was near the heights of Solferino, and at the far extremity of the long plain. Not twenty yards from him a number of Hungarian hussars were engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with some men of his own troop. Two of these were close to him, but were fighting so desperately that they sometimes used the pummel of the sword, being unable to strike. Just as he struggled up an Austrian officer, splendidly mounted, and wearing a rich hussar uniform, disengaged himself from the *mêlée*, and riding up before Isabey had time to interfere, cut down the nearest Chasseur, almost severing his head from his body. Heavily the

Digitized by Google

dead man's body fell to the ground, while the masterless horse dashed on over the plain, drawing the almost headless body along in its flight. With a fierce cry of exultation, the Austrian dashed on; with one back-handed sweep of his sabre, emptying the saddle of a second Chasseur; and the next moment he was striking fiercely at Isabey.

Wearied and wounded, his sabre broken at the guard, and cutting into his hand, the Frenchman had hardly a chance, and now quick and fast came the masses of fugitive Austrian infantry, making for the rear. One tremendous blow from the butt end of a musket, dealt by a Croat soldier, as he passed, had injured his bridle arm, and the Austrian hussar had scored his cheek with a sabre stroke. Half-blind with the blood, and furious with pain, Isabey made a desperate effort—closing with his gallant antagonist, as with one ferocious lunge, in which he concentrated all his remaining strength, the point of his sword drove through the Austrian's heart.

Turning in the direction from which he had come, he rode on; but soon found himself close to the remains of an Austrian square—the remnants of a brigade, evidently lost and bewildered in the smoke and confusion. Leaning low on his horse's neck, he rode on as rapidly as his wounded charger could carry him, receiving a scattered fire as he passed, and soon saw before him the bayonets of the 86th of the line, as the men dashed forward at the double. They passed, and he was now once more among friends,

Digitized by Google

but wounded and faint from loss of blood, parched with thirst, and his thigh lacerated by the splinter of a shell. Dismounting, Isabey staggered along, leading his horse, which was scarcely in better plight than himself. Presently he came upon a group of Turcos, their fierce faces blackened by the desert sun, looking savage and cruel from under their torn and blood-stained turbans. Regiment after regiment was moving on over the plain, pressing on the Austrians' rear; but these fierce-looking men were disputing with a soldier of the 86th, who was standing over an Austrian cavalry officer, whom he had captured. The Turcos were insisting on killing him, affirming they had seen him despatching wounded comrades on the plain. The prostrate officer appealed to Isabey as he passed; but, hearing the accusation, the latter was about to pass on and leave him to his fate. Looking fixedly at the prisoner, he recognised the Uhlan officer whose gallant behaviour had so fearfully imperilled his own troop in front of the out-picquets of Malegnano, and whom he had again met so bravely perilling his own life to save his men, when the prison of Malegnano was carried by the Zouaves. Still, sullen and determined, the Austrian's eyes glared upon him, as he lay hurling back curses in mingled French and German on the enraged Turcos; but, aided by the man of the 86th and by promises of justice, Isabey rescued the Austrian from death, admitting him to quarter. Bidding him follow, the two took their way over the plain,

Digitized by Google

a scene of blinding dust and confusion, towards the French lines. At this moment came a fresh rush of fugitives, and they were at once attacked by the Turcos and the 86th. The loud shouts of the men, the cries for mercy, the deep guttural "Allahs" of the Turcos once more rang round; Isabey and his prisoner being in the centre of the fight.

The temptation was too strong for the dismounted Uhlan. His captor was no match for him, he himself being comparatively fresh and unwounded. Rapidly drawing a pistol from his belt, two strides placed him at Isabey's side. The muzzle touched his breast, as the Austrian pulled the trigger, and one long despairing cry rang through the *mêlée*, as, springing into the air, Isabey fell forward on his face. Seizing the bridle, the Uhlan sprang into the saddle, his sharp spurs scored the sides of the little Arab, and, giving his last pistol full into the centre of the struggling Turcos, with a loud, fierce shout, he dashed through them. Bending low on his horse's neck, he rode over the plain, trampling down the dead and dying in his furious course, and it was not till the next day the horse was found. It was dead; but the daring rider had escaped; nor was he ever afterwards heard of by the French forces.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

FORT DE L'EMPEREUR.

THE noise and tumult had died away; but the Campo di Medole presented a sad sight, for the quiet moon poured its light over a field literally piled with ghastly corpses, broken guns, and dead horses. Among these moved the surgeons and their aides; while carts and ambulances, slowly winding in and out, received their ghastly loads, and then made their way to the rear. All night long they toiled on in hundreds, and when morning dawned the work was yet unfinished. The peasants' houses, the churches, the theatres of the neighbouring towns and villages, were filled with wounded. Every building was crammed with them, and yet the long lines of ambulances and carts came in. The storm that swept over the battle-plain had died away; the pursuit had been stopped, for both armies were exhausted, and the quiet moon shone out on the plain, where the dead lay in ghastly heaps; and there, his pale face seamed with blood, his uniform torn and scorched, lay Isabey. There, too, was the turbaned Turco, the moonlight playing on his bronzed features, and some men of the 86th, scattered here

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

and there, while the white uniforms of the Austrian line lay thickly on the ground. Some dozen of Isabey's own troop stood by; for they had heard of their captain's death from some of the 86th, who had witnessed it; and the pale moonlight quivered and danced over the dead man's features as they placed him on a hurdle, and bore him from the field. The same moon streamed in among the dark stems of the old forest oaks, where the timid deer were browsing, and silvered the white walls of the "Good Ladie's" chapel, where Madame Isabey's wreath hung, and its light was poured into the windows of a little house not far from the forest where the poor wife—unconscious that she was a widow—lay sleeping, a smile playing on her lips as she dreamed perhaps of her absent soldier. They buried him at Castiglione under a spreading olive-tree; and soon the tidings of the glorious day of Solferino rang through Europe. From the Vesia and the Po to the banks of Garda and the Mincio, the allied forces had marched, driving the flower of the Austrian army—commanded by their Emperor himself—before them; and, amidst rejoicings and illuminations, Solferino and returning peace were hailed in France. Few, amidst the general joy, thought of individual sufferers, and one only missed the pale face and fair form which was never again seen among the trees of the forest. A few days after the fatal news reached her, the widow passed away calmly and peacefully, a smile on her lips, and her dead baby pressed to her bosom.

Digitized by Google

The moon again shone in at the windows, lighting up that room where the soldier and his young wife had exchanged their last farewells. A few days more, and the same moon silvered a little grave, and the autumn wind heaped the brown forest leaves over that grave, and the spring brought into life the wild flowers which some kind hand had strewn over that quiet spot. And so the seasons rolled their course; and though the young and the strong have passed away, the grey-haired dreamer of dreams yet remains. But now it is no dream. That long-cherished idea has at length become a reality, and the old man may sit on the moss-grown rocks, and see before him a broad, sweeping carriage-drive leading to a flight of stone steps, which in its turn conducts to the summit of a massive stone tower. This is the "Fort de l'Empereur," and from its summit daily Dennecourt gazes over the forest trees, far away across the plains near Paris, and to the distant towers of old Sens cathedral. The tops of the heavy trees seem to make a carpet of verdure below him, and sixty leagues of horizon lie spread like a map before him. The crowning act of his life has been achieved, and Dennecourt's name will be associated with the old forest until the massive stone-work of the "Emperor's Fort" crumbles into dust, and the fame of "The Good Ladie's" woodland chapel is forgotten. There may he yet be seen gazing with pride on his finished work, and not forgetful of those who aided in his task, when the stone tower was but a dream; for at

Digitized by Google

its foot once grew the wild flowers which now bloom in the churchyard close to the forest—so close, that when the flowers fade, and autumn comes, the wild wind heaps the brown leaves over the quiet grave, where they lie all winter, until an old man's hands remove them, and lets in the first breath of the coming spring to call the forest wild-flowers once more into life.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE BRIG AND THE LUGGER.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I.

ST. VALERY.

THE Reign of Terror was over, and France, long deluged in blood, felt that relief which the death of Robespierre and his creatures brought with it. Still the sense of relief was only a comparative one, for Paris presented daily scenes of battle and of slaughter rarely equalled in any other land, and never surpassed. The Jacobins, now hated by the masses, were the objects of popular persecution. Robespierre, Henriot, and Couthon, had perished. Bands of men, regularly organized and commanded, and armed with heavy loaded sticks, kept the streets. The atrocious Carrier had paid the penalty of his crimes, and Lebon and Fouquier Tinville had fallen and died with him. The heavy cloud which hung over France like a funeral pall, seemed rent asunder, admitting glimpses of light and hope; and soon the death of those whose acts had lowered France to a level with the most uncivilized nations, was followed by the opening of the churches, and the resurrection of religious worship throughout the land. Many of the followers of Robespierre had been imprisoned, and, during their detention, had found means to commu-

Digitized by Google

nicate with the various heads of the faubourgs, who had hitherto acted under their orders, and, in consequence of these machinations, the people had twice risen to the rescue. Twice had they been repulsed; but Collot d'Herbois, Barrière, and Billaud Varennes, were still alive, though prisoners. A third time the infuriated masses of the faubourgs rose, and with the battle cry of "Bread, and the people's rights," they once more swept over Paris. Many of the troops, instead of defending the government of the day, joined them, and eventually, like a raging sea, the mad populace surrounded the doors of the Convention. These doors were closed, but they were soon driven in, and the vast hall was filled with this terrible crowd, the cry of the starving women mingling with the deeper bass of the maddened men, as they clamoured for "Bread, and the people's rights." Blood was soon drawn, and at the sight of it all control was lost over the people, even by their leaders. The Assembly had been presided over by the Deputy Boissy d'Anglas, who, amidst the massacre and confusion, calmly kept his seat, vainly endeavouring, by cool courage and by words, to still the passion for blood and slaughter which raged around him. It was in vain; and the old man sat there in his chair, merely to witness the slaughter of his friends, and wait, with heroic calmness, his own death. That moment soon approached, for with a terrific rush the crowd behind forced on those who confronted the deputies; and though many died, their

Digitized by Google

places were at once filled up, and the people, sweeping the defenders of the Convention before them, filled the place. Still the old man sat in the Presidential chair, his face, unbleached by terror of approaching death, as he quietly, but firmly, protested against the proceedings. Half-a-dozen sabres menaced him. One man, more furious than the rest, struck at him, but a deputy named Ferrand, stepped in between the assassin and his victim, received the blow intended for the old President, and sank to the ground. In an instant the head was severed from the body, and the wretch who had done that felon deed, grasped it by the hair, the eyes yet quivering with nervous life.

The old President still sat, calm and unmoved, his head covered, while the leaders of the insurrection clamoured round him, sabre in hand, insisting that their wishes should be put to the vote, sure as they then were that they would at once be decreed. Still Boissy d'Anglas refused, and the man who had clutched the bleeding head of his late friend and defender, suddenly thrust it in the old man's face, savagely raising his sabre for the death-stroke. Still the President quailed not, but, uncovering, he bowed to the bleeding, senseless head of him who had been his friend, and who had died to save him. A sudden silence, caused by the cool, composed courage which prompted the act, fell on the furious mob, who filled the halls of the Convention. It was only for a moment, but during that momentary silence the loud shouts of the

Digitized by Google

troops, and the yells of the discomfited populace were heard, as the square of the Carousel was carried, and the bright bayonets of the line gleamed up the steps, and in the hall of the Convention. It was the death-blow to popular violence in France; and though hard fighting still remained to be done in the streets, it was carried out; the assassin of the brave Ferrand was taken, the men of the faubourgs disarmed, and from that day may be counted the dawn of light and renewed hope in the land. It was a feeble struggling light which shone on France at that moment, and one which was more than once all but shut out in surrounding gloom, for the blood of her best and noblest citizens had been poured out as water, without object or aim, merely to satisfy the brutal taste of a depraved populace. What remained of the old blood and of the noble names of French chivalry was now to be found in other lands, their owners plunged in poverty and distress, and the poor but noble *emigré* often looking to the hand of charity for his daily bread. Such was the state of things in France in the year 1795, La Vendée alone holding out for monarchy; and even there the well-known partisan leader, Charette, having become involved in disputes with his subordinates, the royal cause languished, and had almost died away. In the future loomed the battle of the 13th Vendémiare, when the Rue St. Honoré and Pont Royal ran with blood, and where the genius of the young artillery officer, Bonaparte, triumphing over the mad courage of the

Digitized by Google

masses, saved the Convention, and led to the existence of the Directory, the power of the First Consul, and the mighty blaze of the glories of the Empire. The inhabitants of Brittany, with their accustomed tenacity, however, still held out, and, ranging themselves under the command of Charette and Stofflet, refused to recognise the decrees of the Convention. Many of the nobles who had emigrated from France had returned by stealth to Brittany, and, naturally, did their best to keep up the disaffection of the Breton peasantry. One cloudy spring morning of the year 1795, the little town of St. Valery-en-Caux, usually one of the quietest little fishing villages of a quiet sea-coast, was astonished by the appearance of a small but smart-looking vessel off the harbour. Accustomed only to the fishing smacks, of which St. Valery always boasted a little fleet, and among a population who lived by the proceeds of the herring fishery a great part of the year, of the deep-sea fishery the rest, the advent of a larger vessel than usual was a circumstance which caused no little astonishment, and a crowd was soon collected on the rude jetty as the vessel in question, a beautiful lugger, stood in for the harbour. She came on under easy sail, her long, low, black hull, her taunt spars, and masts raking well aft, showing she was no merchantman. A battery of ten guns was visible, too, as, passing the jetty, her bows swept gracefully up to the wind, her sails shivering for an instant as she did so. A dozen dark forms appeared on her decks, the

Digitized by Google

sails were clewed up with a rapidity unknown to the merchant service. A sullen splash in the water told she had dropped anchor; and, as she swung to it, turning her sharp bows to the quarter from whence the wind came, all signs of life and motion seemed to vanish on board her.

The St. Valery boats were at sea looking out for herrings, a breeze from the southward was blowing at the time, and as the new comer naturally headed towards the harbour, when she swung to her bearings, nothing could be seen on board her; but curiosity was strong in the minds of the fishermen's wives, and some of them were on the jetty all day leaning against the wooden railings and gazing over the sea towards the dark, rakish-looking craft which floated almost motionless on the waves, while there was generally some broken down old fisherman, too old now to do duty on board, lounging about ready to hazard an opinion as to the nationality of the stranger. The day wore on and not a boat landed from her, indeed she might have been a dead thing so silent and black she loomed on the water. The jetty gradually became deserted, and the lights in the houses of the little town began to gleam through the darkness. The lugger's dark hull was no longer visible, and soon but one solitary form of all those who had crowded there during the day remained on the jetty peering into the darkness to seaward. The watcher's patience was rewarded, for the noise of oars as they moved in the rowlocks, and the swish of

Digitized by Google

water as it parted before the bows of a boat was heard. Taking his way down a flight of rude steps the watcher soon stood on the landing place. A dark mass, blacker than the surrounding waves, was to be seen rising and falling, but otherwise apparently motionless, about twenty paces from him. Putting his hand to his mouth so as to form a trumpet the watcher hailed in a low, gruff voice, "Boat ahoy!" An answering "Halloa!" came over the wave, and the order to the men to give way very quickly followed. In a few seconds the boat was at the landing, and a man rising in her stern anxiously asked, "Is that you, Pierre?" "It is," was the watcher's reply, as he rapidly added, "Send your boat back, and come ashore at once, he waits you, and every moment is fraught with danger." The new comer obeyed silently, stepping ashore, and then, turning to his men, gave his directions. They were simple enough, namely, to return, veer the boat astern, and while everything was kept quiet on board, one man to be left as watcher in the boat. A lighted match on the extreme end of the jetty to be the signal for the crew's return, a pistol shot to take the place of the match if help were needed. The boat pushed off, and the two men clambered up the steps, gained the jetty, and took their way towards the town. They entered a small house, one of the oldest of the place. It was built somewhat after the fashion of a Swiss chalet, and seemed much dilapidated. Leaving the new comer in the hall, the man who had answered to the name

Digitized by Google

of Pierre entered a room, and soon called on his comrade to follow. It was a small and oddly shaped room. The solitary window, looking out on a stable-yard, was narrow and contracted. The panes of glass were set in lead, lozenge shaped, and as though even these precautions to deaden light were insufficient, a heavy green baize covering was drawn over them outside. There was no candle or light of any kind save that given out by a large bright sea-coal fire, which at the same time rendered the little room hot and stifling. A few chairs and a table formed its only furniture. The latter was drawn into the middle of the small, close room, occupying by far too much space, while upon it was thrown carelessly a pair of heavy pistols, and at it, with a map of Brittany spread out before him, sat the occupant of the little room. Rising as the new comer entered, and pushing the map he had been studying on one side, the French nobleman, for such he was, steadfastly eyed his visitor.

Rather above the middle height, but of a powerful, athletic frame, his dark hair flecked with grey, and his black, piercing eyes glancing here and there with a curious, dissatisfied gaze, as though fearing unseen danger, the man might have seen some forty summers, and yet the heavy moustache and imperial were grey as those of one nearly double his age, and his disarranged dress and long, dirty horseman's boots showed he had ridden far that very day. This was Count d'Hervily, one of the chief instigators of

Digitized by Google

the Chouan rebellion. The man who confronted him in the little room at St. Valery-en-Caux was of another stamp. He was evidently a seaman, and a bold and daring one, but it was equally evident he was not a Frenchman, and if so, his position and that of the small vessel he doubtless commanded was a very dangerous one. Not more than five-and-twenty years of age, he seemed young to be in command of such a vessel, which, though it did not carry a royal pennant, was evidently well manned and heavily armed, and that too on an enemy's coast, and on a mission to one of the insurgent chiefs of Brittany. Strongly and powerfully built, his blue eye and light air bespoke his English origin, while the face, though not regularly handsome, was one which from its frank, open and hearty expression, could not fail to please. The blue eyes were frank and intelligent looking, the nose rather large, and the cheek bones too prominent, the whole expression of the face being one of mingled quickness, good-humour, and decision. He wore no uniform, and was unarmed, at least he seemed to be unarmed, and the plain suit of pilot cloth, though neat and well fitting, might equally denote the common seaman or the mate of a first-class merchantman. The only distinctive mark of rank which could be perceived about him was a narrow bead of gold lace encircling his cap just above the peak. Without hesitation he advanced towards the table, the man Pierre retiring as he did so, and carefully closing the door behind him. The French

Digitized by Google

noble seemed greatly agitated, and some seconds passed before he spoke.

"You are in command of the privateer which anchored in the bay this morning, are you not?" at length asked Count d'Hervily.

"I command the lugger Argus," was the reply, given in a pleasing, musical voice by the young sailor, "and though my anchor holds on a French bottom, I have no wish that the morning light should find me so close in to an enemy's coast. To be brief: have I the honour of speaking to the Count d'Hervily; and if so, from whom does he expect tidings?"

"From Monsieur de Sombreuil and Count d'Artois," was the quick reply. "Have you any letters for me?"

"I have," answered the sailor, as he handed to the Count a sealed packet.

Motioning to the young captain to sit down, the French noble with eager nervousness tore open the thick envelope, several letters dropping on the table as he did so. He read them greedily, and though the expression of his face varied as he read by the bright firelight, yet on the whole he seemed satisfied with their contents. The wind was sighing and soughing round the roofs and chimneys, and that with the noise of some belated passer-by, as the wooden sabots rang on the paved street, was the only sound heard. The fire burned and crackled on the hearth, and for some time the two men seemed fully employed, the one carelessly playing with a pistol on the table

Digitized by Google

which seemed to engross his attention, the other wholly absorbed in the letters he was reading.

Half an hour passed, and with the exception of the pattering of the heavy rain-drops on the eaves, showing that the night had set in wet and dark, all was silent. Glancing up from the open letter which he held in his hand, the French noble's eyes became riveted on the face of the young sailor, who was still apparently occupied with his dangerous plaything.

"I have the pleasure of speaking to Captain Richard Goodwin, of the Argus?" asked the old noble ceremoniously.

"I am Richard Goodwin," returned the sailor, "and if the truth were known, Count, I am waiting very anxiously for your reply to those letters."

"Are you aware of their nature, Captain?"

"Only thus far. When I left Spithead, three days since, a powerful fleet was lying there, and on board the Royal George, a noble three-decker, the broad pennant of Admiral Bridport was flying. My instructions were to deliver the letters you have just opened to Count d'Hervily, if possible; but in case of capture, to sink them alongside. The admiral himself gave me my orders, and I was directed to return as soon as possible, giving you a passage if I met you. Twice have I been chased off the coast, and every hour my anchor holds on a French bottom is one of great risk. The night is dark, the wind favourable. In half an hour, Count, we may be under

Digitized by Google

weigh. To-morrow you may be on board the Royal George."

The Count d'Hervily mused a moment, and then rising, knocked in a peculiar manner on the flooring of the room. Steps were soon heard, and the man who had accompanied the young captain of the Argus entered. Taking from the letters on the table three whose greater bulk and large seals evidently betokened official correspondence, he hastily placed them under cover, and then, turning to the young sailor, he said: "In ten minutes, captain, I will be at your orders. I want but to give the necessary instructions and these papers to the messenger who is to convey them to their destination."

With more delicacy than might have been expected the young sailor rose. "In that case, Count, I will signal my boat, and within the time mentioned, it shall be waiting you," and, taking his cap, he turned towards the door. The man Pierre followed him, carefully closing and fastening the door, after exchanging a muttered good-night, quickly followed by a string of guttural oaths, as the sailor, with characteristic carelessness, went whistling up the narrow street in the rain, totally heedless that he was in an enemy's country. On entering the room again, he found the Count sitting by the fire, his cloak, hat and sword on the table, and the pistols with which Goodwin had beguiled the time placed in his belt.

Digitized by Google

Without ceremony, he who had been addressed as Pierre took the vacant chair, and was the first to speak.

"Well, Count, we have risked our lives many a time together, but rarely more than we are doing at the present moment. Is the reward worth the price paid?"

"Judge for yourself, Charette," replied the Count; for it was indeed the famous insurgent leader who was then addressed, and in whose hands D'Hervily placed the packet of letters, as he spoke.

"In ten minutes you must be on board, Count," was the reply, as Charette, without ceremony, pocketed the letters. "Tell me the result in a few words."

"You are aware," replied the Count, "that the Marquis de Puissaye, who, whatever we may think of his capability, represents the royalist cause in Brittany, asked for help from England, and promised, with your assistance and that of Stofflet, to effect a general rising throughout the country. The lugger now lying off the harbour brings the reply."

"Which is——?" asked Charette.

"Which is favourable," replied the Count, "on certain conditions."

Starting from his chair, Charette drew a long, heavy breath, and began pacing the room with quick, hasty strides. Suddenly he stopped, and looking at the Count fixedly, asked—

"And those conditions, D'Hervily, are they such

Digitized by Google

as I can lay before my men? for you know, as well as I do, Count, that, like all popular leaders risen from the people, my power is over men's minds, not despotic."

"The first of them is, perhaps, the only one that you will find hard to fulfil, Charette. It is this: You have long been at variance with a man who divides with you the power you have just named—I mean over the minds of the Bretons—and the insurgent royalists are now split into two sections, led by yourself and Stofflet. The consequences of these quarrels have been ruinous to the royal cause in Brittany. The English government ask that this be put an end to, and on condition of united and instantaneous action on your part, propose to land a strong force, commanded by De Sombreuil and myself, somewhere off Quiberon, to attack and destroy the army under Hoche."

"But the French fleet under Villaret? It is impossible to land troops on the French coast while that fleet holds the whole seaboard of Brittany," answered the peasant-leader, quickly.

"The letters you have placed in your pocket will tell you, Charette, that there is this moment lying at Spithead a noble fleet, composed of three ships of the line, mounting each one hundred guns, five others of ninety-eight guns each, one eighty gun-ship, and five seventy-fours, together with a number of frigates, and, on my arrival in England. to assume, conjointly with Monsieur de Sombreuil, the command

Digitized by Google

of our *emigrés*, that fleet will sail in search of Monsieur Villaret, and he will be overmatched."

"Ma foi," cried Charette, in a loud voice, and forgetting his ordinary Breton caution in the joy these tidings caused him, as he paced heavily to and fro in the close little room, "I promise, Stofflet and I will work together, or rather Monsieur de Puisaye shall command us, the whole of Brittany shall fly to arms, not a moment shall be lost, and with these glorious tidings once known, we will change the face of the land. Vive le Roi."

"Softly, my good Charette, softly. You will at once return to our head-quarters, and place those letters in Monsieur de Puisaye's hands."

The old noble rose, and throwing his cloak over his arm, took up his sword, as he continued: "Having done so, your task is easy, and I know none more capable of performing it than yourself. About the same time that you reach M. de Puisaye, I shall be on board the Royal George, off Spithead. I will find the means to make you acquainted with the movements of the fleet. But, Charette, to do this I must leave at once—and my daughters. Poor Isabel—poor Berthe! I hardly thought to have left France, even on this glorious mission, without seeing you again. Charette," continued the French noble, grasping the peasant-chief's broad, powerful hand with his own finely-drawn fingers, "Charette, if I fall in the coming strife, and something tells me I shall, I die for my country and my king; and I leave my

Digitized by Google

daughters, motherless, to the protection of their native land and their beloved Brittany."

"And freely is the legacy accepted," returned Charette. "So long as a spark of loyalty and love for the good and the noble is alive in a Breton heart, so long shall a protector be found for the noble girls; and now, Count," said the Chouan, as he wrung D'Hervily's hand, "to our work. I will take your horse as the fastest, and let us away."

The fire had burned low in the grate, leaping up in fitful flashes of flame from time to time, and the heavy, ceaseless pattering of the rain, with the loud sough of the wind as it rattled among the loose tiles of the old roof, were the only sounds to be heard, as the Count and his companion stepped out into the thick darkness, exchanging one close, hearty grasp of the hand as they went on their several ways, the one to call for the help of a hostile nation against his own people, the other to light up, by means of the tidings of that coming help, the enthusiasm of a warlike peasantry once more into flame in favour of a king whose power had departed from him, and whose name was nowhere revered, save by the sturdy but stolid peasants on the plains of Brittany.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

SAIL, HO!

MORNING dawned over the ocean, and the wind which had chopped round shortly after midnight, now blew freshly and steadily from the north-east, just curling the long waves of the English Channel and tipping the green water with foam. The long lines of cliffs were hidden in the light haze which so often accompanies a north-easter in the Channel, and any one looking out on the sea would not have enjoyed a very distant view even from the heights. Some forty miles away to seaward, a long, low, black-looking lugger was standing on, close hauled, with the land broad on her starboard bow. She was a large, heavy craft, though she did not look it, for from her great breadth of beam, and the almost total absence of any bulwarks, her long hull sat so lightly on the water, and rose and fell so easily with the waves, that at a short distance she could hardly be perceived in the dim haze.

Her crew consisted of one hundred and twenty men, many of them men-of-wars-men, draughted from the Spithead fleet to make up the complement of the lugger, for it was the Argus which was moving

Digitized by Google

through the waters as steadily and with as grea swiftness as a large fish. She carried a battery of ten guns, which seemed a short armament for a lugger of her class; but the guns were brass and were heavy ones. In fact they were unusually so, being 12-pounders, and it was this fact which had caused the Argus to be for the moment in the employ of the Government, her original owners having built her and fitted her out as a privateer, and her original port from which she had sailed being Liverpool. She now carried a long pennant, a little bit of conceit perhaps on the part of her captain, but that and the narrow bead of gold lace round his cap were two little weaknesses of her commander, Captain Richard Goodwin, who now paced to and fro on the lugger's deck, where he had remained from the moment when, after parting with the insurgent leader, Count d'Hervily had embarked on board the craft.

It had been a night of great anxiety for him, for the wind had blown strongly from the southward for several hours, chopping suddenly round about two hours after midnight, and finally settling down in the almost opposite quarter. He knew himself to be well up Channel, and as dawn broke slowly, he calculated the position of the lugger must be one which would place her about forty miles from the Isle of Wight.

"Turn all hands up, Mr. Edwards, take a pull at the weather halyards, and keep her close to the wind,

Digitized by Google

until we make the land," cried the Captain, as he stopped in his walk and leaned over the side to mark the rate of sailing.

"Ay, ay, sir," was the ready response as the shrill whistle sounded, rousing from their short sleep men who had passed that night nearly without any, and soon the whole crew were mustered at quarters; while the watch on deck were employed as usual in holystoning, and drenching with the salt-water, decks already spotlessly clean.

Roused by the noise and bustle, and not accustomed to the swish of the water around him, the Count d'Hervily, who had turned in shortly before midnight, and, tired out with long and severe exertion and anxiety, had slept soundly, came on deck. Moving up to the young seaman unperceived, as he leaned over the side, the French noble spoke.

"We are slipping through the water fast, Captain Goodwin; are you satisfied with our night's run?"

"I never saw the little Argus in better trim, Count. Mr. Phillips, let the men breakfast, and then keep them at quarters till further orders. Count, will you take the usual quarter-deck turn with me until the steward tells us our breakfast is ready."

"Willingly," replied his companion; "but you seem tired and wearied with long watching. We are now at all events not on an enemy's coast, had you not better take the repose you so much need."

"Not till I put you on board the Royal George, at Spithead, Count," returned the seaman. "The

Digitized by Google

moment I have made the land we shall edge away, and with the wind free, a very short time will carry us up to Plymouth. This Channel swarms with small craft ready to pounce upon the English merchantmen, and though on ordinary occasions I should not wish to avoid an enemy, on the present, until you are, as I said before, on board the Royal George, and my mission fulfilled, I could wish to be at peace with all men."

"What distance are we from land, Captain Goodwin?" asked D'Hervily; "and where does it lie?"

"About thirty to forty miles," answered the sailor, "and we are heading straight for it. Were it not for the haze, we should see it distinctly, but as the sun gains power that will disappear."

The two now paced to and fro on the lugger's deck, the young captain giving an order from time to time. He was evidently anxious, and it was that anxiety which had prompted him to run across Channel from St. Valery-en-Caux rather than steer a straight course for Spithead, for he had received stringent verbal instructions from Admiral Bridport personally to perform the mission entrusted to him, and if possible avoid all collision. "Had I needed fighting, Captain Goodwin," the admiral had added, "I should have sent a frigate; but as I do not, I entrust you with a mission perilous enough, but which, if well and quickly performed, will raise you in my esteem. And now go, young man; in ten minutes I hope to see the Argus clear of my fleet."

Digitized by Google

And in less than that time the Argus was under all sail heading directly for the French coast; but three times had she been chased away, by ships of superior force, and it was only her swiftness which had saved her. Time therefore pressed, and more was being lost by the course shaped for her return during the night, though safety had been better ensured by it. Safety was generally the last thing the young seaman thought of, and it was this which was fretting him as he paced the deck of the beautiful lugger with the Count by his side. The men were at breakfast, the officers of the watch on deck, but on the leeward side. The decks had been holystoned, the ropes coiled down. Every sail drew to admiration, the wind was steady, and the little lugger was slipping through the green seas, at the rate of ten knots an hour, heading straight for the English coast.

Count d'Hervily was again the first to break silence, as with all a Frenchman's curiosity he forgot his own situation to think of that of his companion.

"Yours must have been an eventful though a short life, Captain Goodwin," he said, "to place you so young in command."

"Oh," replied the sailor, laughing; "I was born on the sea. My father was a clergyman, and receiving the appointment of chaplain to an Indian station, passed many years of his life there. Leaving Madras for the Cape on sick leave, he married a lady whom he met there on her way to India to join

Digitized by Google

her brother. My mother had not any fortune, and when I was born, twelve months after, both my parents were on their way back to Madras, so that I was born at sea; but I shall tire you, Count."

"On the contrary, I am deeply interested," replied the Frenchman with stately courtesy; "pray continue, Captain Goodwin."

"It was blowing a heavy gale the day I was born, but it blew a still heavier the day I was christened, and though my father, who performed the ceremony for me, was a pretty good sailor, he nearly let me fall overboard more than once.

"It was the last kind act he ever did for me, Count, for the crazy old merchantman, on board which he had taken our passage, rolled and tumbled the masts out of her. The gale was a fearful one, and the Thetis laid her bones on shore on the Isle of France. More than half the ship's company perished; my father and mother were drowned when close to shore by the boat upsetting, and I was saved by the kindness of the old sailor who held me at the time, and who, though nearly dead when he was rolled up on the shore by a larger wave than usual, still held me firmly in his arms.

"I was alone in the world, and old Adams adopted me. I was too young to remember anything, but I have been told that on Adams leaving the Mauritius he insisted on taking his adopted child with him. An English resident there had taken compassion on the poor orphan, and persuaded Adams to leave me

Digitized by Google

with him. The ship he sailed in was never heard of again, and my friend, after having made the necessary inquiries, acquainted my father's relatives with my existence. I was five years old when my protector left the island for England, taking me with him, and so I was once more at sea. This time I can well remember the voyage, and the delight it gave me. On my arrival in England, I was, much to my chagrin, delivered over to my relatives, or rather to my father's brother, a man already endowed with a large family and a small fortune. He managed, however, to give me a fair education. My old habits had not been forgotten, and my love for the sea led me to it in search of a profession, and, as my fit-out cost little, my choice was approved of; the small remains of my father's estate handed over to me, and I and my chest, together with a letter of introduction to a merchant of that town, were consigned to Liverpool. Luck favoured me, and here I am, at twenty-five years of age, captain of as fine a lugger, manned by as gallant a crew, as ever sailed on salt water."

"And you have never married?" inquired the Count.

"Ma foi, no; I once felt inclined, but that was only for idleness' sake, said the sailor, laughing. "We fought a French cutter. I was only a lad then, and was mate of the old Liverpool tub we sailed, but we got the worst of it, and were taken into Dunkirk. I had nothing to do, and so I fell in

Digitized by Google

love, but the day before we were to be sent inland I and some comrades managed to steal a small boat. There was no more time to think of Ma'amselle Marie then, and, after two days' tossing about, we were picked up by a merchant brig, and reached England safely."

The sun had risen as the two had been talking, and the mist cloud was gradually fading away before it. Just as the captain of the Argus ceased, the clouds rose rolling along the face of the sea.

"Sail, ho," shouted the look-out.

Captain Goodwin instantly broke away from his companion. "Where away?" was the sharp question that at once followed. "Mr. Edwards, step forward, if you please, and let me know what you make of her."

"Ay, ay, sir," said that officer, as taking up a glass he moved forward. The young sailor returning aft, looked at the compass, and then glanced anxiously over the sails of his little craft.

"Well, Mr. Edwards, what do you make of her?" he asked, as his first lieutenant, or rather the one who filled that post, came towards him.

"The fog has settled down again so heavily that I can make out nothing; but Williams says that at the moment he saw her she loomed large, and he makes her out a heavy cutter, standing on the same course as ourselves."

"A revenue cutter, I dare say; but stay, Edwards, there's the fog lifting again, show our colours."

Digitized by Google

The English flag rose slowly in the wind, as the sun once more cleared away the fog and mist which lay packed upon the sea, showing, as it did so, a large cutter, not three miles away and to leeward. Hardly had the men of the lugger made her out, when a white puff of smoke spurted from her bows, and the heavy thud of the gun had not been heard before the folds of the French tricolor blew out on the breeze, while the cutter, coming gracefully to the wind, remained hove to, as though never doubting for an instant that the lugger would bear down on her and engage.

It was evident to the crew of the latter vessel that the Frenchman was superior in the number of her guns, for she mounted fourteen, and the very fact of her being so made them the more anxious to bring her into port; but minute after minute passed by and still the lugger held on her way, while Captain Goodwin paced her deck, to and fro, with a quick and excited footstep. A stern battle was being waged in his heart, for here he was in the very position he had so eagerly sought to avoid, and which he would as eagerly have courted under any other circumstances. Admiral Bridport's parting instructions came vividly to his memory, and yet, at this moment, a second gun from the French cutter, sorely tried his powers of endurance.

Count d'Hervily saw the struggle that was going on in the breast of the young sailor, and after all, though an *emigré*, and one too seeking shelter and help from

Digitized by Google

his country's direst foe, he could not avoid feeling proud of his own nation when the cutter's second gun came booming over the wave, and her head fell off from the wind as she braced sharp up in pursuit. The men were gathered together in groups round the guns, the lugger's officers were on the lee side of the deck aft, and it was evident the discipline of the crew was not of the same description as would have been found on board a king's ship, for the men muttered among themselves, and looked sulky, and dissatisfied. Still Captain Goodwin paced the deck; the crew, though discontented at being thus chased, and at flying from their opponent, not daring to express their discontent more openly, and the officers watching his every movement.

"Mr. Edwards," said the Captain at length, motioning that officer to his side, "at what distance do you place the Frenchman?"

"Not two miles away," answered the lieutenant; "we could have her in half an hour, sir. Shall I beat to quarters?"

"No, sir, we must make sail and endeavour to escape," was the reply.

"What, run from the Frenchman! It will be an eternal disgrace, not only to the Argus but to the service. You forget, Captain Goodwin, we carry the pennant now."

"Listen, Edwards," replied his superior; who then related to the lieutenant the strong verbal instructions he had received from the admiral to avoid an enemy;

Digitized by Google

and trust more to his sails than to his guns. The subordinate officer was convinced, and for half an hour the two paced the deck in silence.

"She must be a very fast craft, that Frenchman," remarked one of the lugger's midshipmen, loud enough to be heard by his captain, at the expiration of this period. "She is coming up with us hand over hand."

Glancing from the deck, in the direction of the enemy, Captain Goodwin saw at once the truth of the youngster's remark. Not only had the French cutter diminished greatly the distance which had separated the two half an hour since, but she had sailed closer to the wind, probably from intentional carelessness in the steering of the lugger.

Captain Goodwin sighed deeply. "He must be a bold fellow who commands on board that cutter," he remarked, "to run thus for the English coast, when, if he is crippled, he is sure to be picked up. Hands, make sail, Mr. Edwards."

Just at this moment the cutter fired. A column of white smoke curled from her bows, and the accuracy of the aim was at once evident by the long rent in one of the lugs.

The canvas was old, the wind was strong, and the next instant the sail was flying in shreds. The crew of the lugger heard, or fancied they heard, a cheer from the Frenchman. It was more than enough, and the recollection of the admiral's instructions passed away.

Digitized by Google

"Bend a new sail, Mr. Edwards. Beat to quarters; cast loose the guns," were the orders rapidly given and cheerfully obeyed.

"Tell the gunner to send up the ammunition. Now, look sharp with that lug, my men. Cheerily, lads, cheerily; up with the sail, and we will soon pay mounseer off for that shot." Twice had the long gun from the cutter made itself heard, but both times the shot had missed the lugger, who, in less time than has been taken to relate it, had bent her new sail. The men were at quarters, the screens up, and the officers at their posts.

"Keep her away, and let her run down on the Frenchman; reserve your fire, my lads, until you have the order; and, here, youngster," said the Captain, beckoning to a young midshipman who was standing at one of the quarter guns, "go round the battery, and tell each captain of a gun to level low. Every shot to strike the water line.

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the lad as he moved away, quickly passing round the deck to communicate his orders, and then returning to his post. The cutter had ceased firing as soon as she saw her adversary keep away, and was now busy reducing her sail into fighting trim. On board the lugger all was quiet, and, though the whole of her crew were at quarters, hardly a whisper could be heard. The swish of the water, as her sharp bows parted it, and the scream of a large herring gull, which was sweeping above her spars, were the only sounds to be heard,

Digitized by Google

while the mist, which had cleared a little, seemed now to be settling down as heavily as ever.

A few minutes had passed; the lugger, rapidly nearing her adversary, who, under reduced sail, was barely moving through the water, awaiting her, when the Captain, as he turned in his walk along the lugger's deck, found himself confronted by the French nobleman, whom, in the excitement of the moment, he had totally forgotten.

"I have to beg your pardon, Count," he said, addressing the latter; "but, having done what I could to avoid fighting, even to such a point as to shake the confidence my men have hitherto had in me, I now find myself compelled either to fight or to run the risk of some stray shot disabling my masts. In ten minutes we shall be exchanging guns with yonder cutter. We fight your countrymen, Count; and, as your sympathies cannot be with us, it would be a pity to expose your person. Here, youngster! show Count d'Hervily below!"

"Thank you, Captain," replied the French noble, bowing with stately politeness. "I will certainly go below, but no farther than my own cabin, for my sword; and if that young gentleman will do me the favour of fetching it, even that momentary absence will be unnecessary. I see on board yonder cutter no countrymen of mine. I see only the wretched followers of Robespierre and Marat—the men who have desecrated and destroyed monarchy, and the murderers of my king."

Digitized by Google

"As you like, Count; but I must leave you."

A gun from the cutter, the shot from which passed between the lugger's masts, was followed by her whole broadside. The two vessels were rapidly approaching each other; and, as he glanced aloft, a few ropes hanging loose and swaying to and fro in the wind, together with a rent or two in the sails, showed Captain Goodwin that the fire had been too high.

"Steady, my lads! steady!" shouted the Captain; "meet her with the helm, Mr. Edwards. Now, level low and fire!"

The crash of the lugger's broadside, as it was poured into the cutter at pistol-shot distance, followed on the words, and the roar of the guns was now continuous, as the men on board either craft loaded and fired as quickly as they could, cheering as they did so. For ten minutes did the two vessels pour their fire into each other, the distance between them gradually lessening. The groans of the wounded began to be heard, mixed with the cheers of the men as, the halyards of the cutter's mainsail being shot away, the sail came tumbling down, lumbering up her decks.

"Starboard the helm, Mr. Edwards! starboard!" shouted Goodwin, as the lugger drew a-head; and, feeling the helm, fell off, passing right across the crippled cutter's bows, the whole broadside of the lugger being poured in, raking the Frenchman fore and aft. Coming suddenly to the wind again,

Digitized by Google

the lugger rounded to under the cutter's stern, firing gun after gun right into it; the French crew hampered with the fallen sail, and being for the moment helpless, could only reply with musketry.

"Now, Mr. Edwards, lay her alongside; we can't waste our time. Boarders away!" shouted Goodwin, as the two vessels crashed together, and a grapnel was thrown into the cutter's rigging.

Springing forward, Captain Goodwin, followed by his men, poured over the bulwarks and on to the cutter's deck; but here a terrible fight took place, while flasks filled with gunpowder and sulphur, and supplied with fusees, were showered upon the lugger's decks, and amongst her crew. The tall form of the old Count fighting hand to hand by the side of the lugger's captain, and his strange battle-cry of "Vive le Roi," might be seen and heard as the two crews mixed in deadly combat; and the grinding of the ships' sides, as they rolled and tore against each other, with the bellying and flapping of the sails, mixed itself with the patter of the musketry, and the occasional heavy thud of one of the guns.

"A vous traitre!" shouted the loud voice of the French captain, as, discharging his pistol full in the face of the lugger's boatswain, and bespattering Goodwin with the blood of the dead man, the gallant Frenchman passed his sword through Count d'Hervily's arm, receiving in return a sword-cut, which nearly severed his head from his body. Their cap-

Digitized by Google

tain's death discouraged the cutter's crew, and gradually they were beaten back, still fighting, until the decks were cleared, the hatches on, and the English Jack waving over the French tricolor. This latter had been hauled down by Count d'Hervily himself, who in his rage and excitement trampled it under foot; but it was rescued, though never to resume its accustomed place.

The lugger received forty shots in her hull, and was fired in two places by the exploding flasks. The fire was quickly got under; but a four-pound shot had passed through her foremast, and her rigging was very much cut. Of her crew only two men were killed on board, and the boatswain, together with twenty wounded, three of whom subsequently died, fell on the cutter's deck.

The latter was terribly cut up by the lugger's fire, and her loss was more than treble that of her opponent; for the fight, though short, had been a desperate one.

In half an hour the two vessels were running in for land under easy sail, the wounded were cared for, the guns secured, the decks cleared, and a prize crew, commanded by Mr. Edwards, on board the cutter. The cliffs of the Isle of Wight were seen before noon; and shortly after, the lugger, closely followed by the cutter, from which the English Jack blew out clearly over the tricolor of France, dropped her anchor close to the Royal George at Spithead, which ship bore the broad pennant of Admiral

Digitized by Google

Bridport. The men of the leading ships of the English fleet gave the gallant little lugger three cheers as her anchor was dropped, and an hour later Captain Goodwin stood on the quarter-deck of the flag-ship, his mission accomplished, as he presented Count d'Hervily to the English admiral.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

THE QUIBERON EXPEDITION.

THE disastrous expedition in which Monsieur de Sombreuil and Count d'Hervily took so prominent a part is too well known to necessitate its details being given here, except in so far as relates to our tale. The squadron which lay at Spithead awaiting the return of the Argus from her perilous mission consisted of three ships-of-the-line—the Royal George, Queen Charlotte, and Queen, each mounting one hundred guns. Five others, mounting ninety-eight; one eighty-gun ship, the old Sans Pareil, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Lord Hugh Seymour; and five seventy-fours, among which was the Orion, then commanded by Captain Sir James Saumarez. Five frigates, one twenty-gun ship, two fire, and one hospital-ship, together with two luggers, one of which was the Argus, Captain Richard Goodwin, accompanied the fleet.

With this fleet our tale has little to do; for, at the same time, a second fleet, under the orders of Sir John Borlase Warren, consisting of three line-of-battle ships—the Robust, Thunderer, and Standard; the frigates Pomone, Anson, Artois, Arethusa, Con-

Digitized by Google

corde, and Galatea, sailed. The men-of-war had under their convoy fifty sail of transports crammed with *emigrés* under the direct command of the Count d'Hervily and of Monsieur de Sombreuil. The mission of the fleet under Admiral Bridport was to bring to action the French, commanded by Admiral Villaret de Joyeuse, who was supposed to be at anchor in Brest harbour. But the French fleet had sailed, and some intelligence having reached him, Admiral Villaret cruised off Belle Isle, guarding the very coast on which the descent was to be made.

The Arethusa frigate fell in with the French fleet, and, narrowly escaping capture, brought the intelligence to the admiral, who had hoisted his flag on board the Pomone. Rallying his transports about him, the invading flotilla went about to join Admiral Bridport's force, which was actually unable to find the French fleet, and on the morning of the 20th June the Pomone came in sight of the Royal George.

That day the lugger Argus spoke the Pomone with orders from Admiral Bridport to Sir John to detach from his fleet the three line-of-battle ships, and then proceed on his way once more, landing the expedition near Quiberon. Admiral Bridport engaged to keep the French fleet in play, while the landing was effected. This he did by engaging Admiral Villaret de Joyeuse, and, after a hard-fought action, capturing three of his ships—the Alexandre, Tigre, and Formidable, seventy-four gun-ships.

Digitized by Google

In obedience to the orders received, the fleet, under the command of Sir John Borlase Warren, sailed into Quiberon bay on the 25th June, disembarking a force of about three thousand men. The greater part of these were *emigrés*, and they were at once joined, in accordance with the agreement made in the little room at St. Valery, by a large body of the insurgent Chouans, which at once placed Count d'Hervily at the head of a force of eight thousand men. The first movements of the invading army were successful. Fort Penthievre surrendered, and its garrison of six hundred men became prisoners of war; but a strong force of the French line held the heights of St. Barbe, so that the invading force had actually gained nothing, save the beautiful harbour of Quiberon, Fort Penthievre and its garrison, and the little islands of Hoedec and Houat.

Time wore on, and the fleet being well provisioned, and having landed arms, ammunition, and stores in abundance, the Chouan leaders seemed in no hurry to move. At length, on the 16th July, Count d'Hervily, having under his command a force of five thousand French, to which were added five hundred marines from the fleet, the heights of St. Barbe were attacked. Utterly defeated by the troops under Hoche, D'Hervily was mortally wounded, and his men only saved from annihilation by the guns of the English fleet. A pause now succeeded to the din of battle, but the Royalists were thoroughly demoralized. Every day whole

Digitized by Google

companies deserted, many of them passing over to the enemy, and others finding their way back to Brittany, spread alarm and despondency among the few yet faithful to the royal cause. At length, on the 20th of July, during a violent gale, almost approaching to a hurricane, an attack was planned by Hoche on Fort Penthievre, which, once gained, the invading army could be driven into the sea. The darkness of the night aided the attacking force; and just as they reached the fort, their advance captured a party of Breton insurgents, who had quietly deserted their post, and were making for the open country.

Their choice was soon made. Death on the one hand, safety on the other; and led by these renegades, Hoche's soldiery poured into the open gates of Fort Penthievre. A horrible massacre ensued, as the cry of "Vive le Roi," grew more and more feeble, and the ground became saturated with Royalist blood. Out of the whole force eleven hundred only, led by De Puisaye, escaped to the shore, and ultimately gained the fleet. D'Hervily, sorely wounded, had been transported on board the Argus, and De Sombreuil, a young and gallant Frenchman, was in command. Nobly he did his duty; and excited by his example, the Chouans and the *emigrés* fought to the last, until the force under his command was reduced to eight hundred men, when Hoche, in admiration of their brave defence, offered them terms.

Digitized by Google

These were eagerly accepted; but hardly had the conquered given up their arms, when the representative Tallien, arrived on the spot. Taking the command, this cruel and hard-hearted man at once, and in the name of the nation, ignored Hoche's capitulation. Those who had surrendered on the faith of the General's promise were thrown into prison, and the choice given them was that of joining the army of the Republic or death. The few left were men in whose veins ran the noblest blood of France. De Sombreuil was shot, and with him perished the greater part of those who remained. They were brought out in companies, and in the name of the nation, by order of the representative Tallien, were fired into. They died to a man; but a few of the privates purchased life at the expense of honour, and joined the Republic.

Ten thousand stand of arms was lost, clothing and provisions for forty thousand men fell into the hands of the conquerors. The Royalist cause received a blow from which it never recovered, and though one or two feeble attempts were subsequently made, the Chouan rebellion but lingered on, and the hopes of the royalists, even in Brittany, were for ever extinguished.

The Argus had not fired a gun since her engagement with the French cutter, having been employed principally as a look-out; and when day dawned on the 21st, the whole fleet, under the command of Sir John Borlase Warren, were working up against a

Digitized by Google

strong south-east wind, to regain their anchorage. The weather had been very stormy, a succession of heavy gales following one on another.

The lugger being a most weatherly craft, and able, from her light draught of water, to run close in shore, was the first to receive the tidings of the disastrous affair of the previous night. Count de Puisaye had entrenched himself, his rear resting on the beach; the whole of the remaining force had been either cut to pieces or made prisoners, and the hopes of those under De Puisaye's command rested solely on the boats of the fleet, which eventually brought off the survivors, amounting to eleven hundred men.

The fleet then got under weigh, the Argus lugger, on board of which lay the Count D'Hervily mortally wounded, being signalled to part company, and bear away for Spithead. The wind being at south-east, the lugger soon lost sight of the English fleet; but during the night the gale, instead of diminishing, increased in fury. The sun rose red and fiery, while to windward, the heavy clouds, in thick masses, banked up the horizon. With hardly a rag of sail set, the two lugs being close reefed, the little lugger slipped through the waves, making pretty good weather of it, though now and then some long, curling, green wave, tipped with white foam, would break on board of her, pouring tons of the clear salt-water on her decks, which rolled away into the lee scuppers, swishing about her decks, until the motion of the vessel gradually discharged it back into the angry

Digitized by Google

ocean. The sea ran very high, for it was the second day after leaving the fleet, and the third of the gale, which was one long remembered on the seaboard of both England and France. Sometimes dipping into the deep troughs of the ocean, the little lugger would seem to pause for a moment, the rags of sails becalmed between the giant waves, to rise the next on an enormous sea, the full force of the gale striking her and heeling her over, until the bright copper might be seen to her very keel, as if she were about to rise like a sea-bird from the boiling ocean. The wind howled and whistled through the rigging, and far as the eye could reach was one boiling mass of angry foam, the dark, leaden-coloured masses of cloud driving before the fierce gale overhead, and the wild ocean lashed into fury around.

The ports were closed, the guns doubly secured, the hatches were down, and only the few which the safety of the vessel demanded were on deck. The storm raged above and death was busy below, for the Argus had received her complement of wounded; and what with the nature of their wounds, and the violent motion of the vessel consequent on the gale, death had been busy between decks. In the cabin aft lay the Count d'Hervily, and beside him, his arm passed round one of the stanchions to steady himself, sat Richard Goodwin. The sharpened features, the sunken eye, filled with a strange, anxious, unnatural light, the thin white hand plucking at the coverlet, and the pale, attenuated features told their own tale,

Digitized by Google

and that was one of approaching death. Round his head was tied a long fold of linen, clotted with blood, for the heavy rolling of the vessel deranged the bandage, and it was with difficulty, though well used to the lugger's motion, that Goodwin moistened it from time to time. The howling of the gale, as it tore through the rigging, and the thud of the seas as they struck against the lugger's counter, were the only sounds heard, for the dying man uttered no groans, though he seemed to suffer much. He had been long insensible, and even at that moment, though his eyes were open, the intellect was absent. Now, he was again leading his men to the assault; and he endeavoured to wave his arm as his lips parted, and Goodwin could just catch the feeble cry of "Vive le Roi." Now, he was with his daughters, and the wildness of his eye became subdued as the name of Berthe or of Isabel hovered on lips dry, white and hard with the coming death. Soon the nervous twitching returned, and the face, before noble and commanding, would, while the last struggle against dissolution agitated it, become horrible and distorted with the agony of convulsions. One of these fits of convulsive suffering had just passed away. It had been longer and more severe than any of the preceding ones; so much so, that, thinking he must die, and that the enfeebled frame could not bear it, Goodwin had directed the marine at the door to call the surgeon. He came, and, shaking his head, said he could do nothing. Count d'Her-

Digitized by Google

vily had not half-an-hour to live, and all he could do was to give a little support in the way of stimulant.

This seemed to revive the dying man, as, with a shudder pervading the whole frame, he appeared to regain composure.

It is a strange thing, but one that has long been known to medical men, that those under their care, perhaps in a state of apparent insensibility, totally dead to the events passing around them, have on their regaining consciousness been not only aware of every word spoken during the period of catalepsy, but perfectly remembered it. So it was in the present instance, for though the furious gale was at its height, and the whistling of the winds, the dash of the waves, and the creaking of the lugger's timbers as she rose to the seas, had barely permitted Goodwin himself to hear the low tones of the ship's surgeon, the dying man had heard, understood, and remembered them. A few moments of comparative calm succeeded the convulsion, and the heavy, laboured breathing became more subdued. Strength seemed to revive under the effects of the powerful stimulant. A small stream of blood had trickled from under the disarranged bandage, and as Goodwin leaned over to wipe it away he caught some words, the purport of which he could not distinguish. The Count's eyes were open, and his glance was turned towards the doctor, who held the remains of the diluted spirit he had administered. With the quickness of one accustomed to such scenes the

Digitized by Google

surgeon caught the meaning of the glance, and steadying himself by the woodwork, he complied, giving the remainder of the dose.

Count d'Hervily seemed revived, and spoke in low, feeble tones, but this time their purport was distinguishable.

"Thank you, doctor," he murmured; "now leave me."

Both the surgeon and the captain rose, but motioning to the latter to remain, D'Hervily closed his eyes and seemed to pause for strength. Gradually collecting himself he spoke.

"Captain Goodwin," he muttered, and it was with painful difficulty the young sailor caught the low tones amidst the howling of the gale and creaking of the timbers, "I have not half an hour to live. The surgeon is right. I die among strangers, far from my own land, and by the hand of my own countrymen."

He paused and then continued: "I die as my king did, by the hand of Frenchmen; but more fortunate than he, I have a kind friend, a true comrade to soothe my passage to eternity. You will give me a sailor's grave? and I have one more request."

"Name it," said Goodwin, "and on the honour of a sailor it shall be done if I live."

"When I first met you at St. Valery to start on this disastrous expedition I came from Noirmoutier. It is an island at the mouth of the Loire. But I must be brief. I feel my strength going. I left there,

Digitized by Google

under the care of General Charette, my two daughters. I was once very rich. I have now nothing, and of all my possessions I have but retained the title-deeds of one small estate. The papers will be found on my body. When this war is over and my country has returned to its true allegiance, I would ask of you to see that Berthe d'Hervily, my eldest daughter, receives these papers. It will give my motherless girls the means of life."

"I promise," replied Goodwin, "if God spares me to see the end of this war, I will do your behest personally; if I die, I will bequeath your wish to another."

"May the God of the fatherless protect you and bless you!" murmured the dying man, whose hands once more began to pluck at the coverlet. "My poor Isabel! my king! my country!"

The intellect was again wandering, and the breathing was becoming fainter and fainter. The boom of a gun far away to seaward seemed once more to arouse him, as the memory of his last battle-field gained possession of the soldier's mind. The blood trickled slowly over the pale face, the jaw moved convulsively, the whole frame shuddered, as though feeling the cold hand of death. Once the eyes opened, and they seemed turned full on Goodwin as he leaned over the berth, the lips parted, and the one word "Remember!" reached the listener's ear, 'mid the roar of the waves. One long breath was succeeded by a lengthened pause. Again the

Digitized by Google

chest filled as life struggled with death, but the doom had gone forth. One more long convulsive struggle, the jaw dropped, and Count d'Hervily was no more.

That very day, while the Argus was struggling with the storm, the English fleet having taken possession of the islands of Hoedec and Houat, had appeared at the mouth of the Loire, but only to find the island of Noirmoutier in possession of the Republican army, and General Charette, having been surprised and disastrously beaten, a fugitive and an outlaw.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

THE SISTERS.

On the little island of Noirmoutier, situated at the mouth of the Loire, there existed in the year 1795 a small convent. It was but a very small building, and had been formerly merely an appanage of one of the larger clerical institutions on the main land, and had served as a place of retreat for any of the monks in need of perfect quiet and seclusion. It had long been neglected, and the broken windows and damaged roof promised little to any one seeking shelter in the building. The wind ran riot in its long corridors, the rain beat into the little cells, and the only really habitable places in the whole were the cellars, where the old monks had stored their wine in former days, and which were large and airy.

The little island was held by the chiefs of the Chouannerie, and both it and the convent were crowded with the armed peasantry. Badly armed, and half-clothed, the sturdy Bretons seemed ill fitted to cope with the soldiers of the Republic, but yet they had done so successfully, and though now reduced to great straits, were full of hope, waiting as they were for the arrival of the English fleet, to

Digitized by Google

which they looked for arms, ammunition, and provisions. General Charette, one of the chiefs of the revolted peasantry, held the command, and with him, temporarily housed in the convent, were many of the wives and families of the insurgents, as well as those of many of the *emigrés*, waiting the news of the success of the expedition landed in Quiberon Bay, which was to decide whether they were to enter France as victors or seek safety behind the guns of the British fleet. They never had the choice, however; for, suddenly attacked by the Republican forces, the half-armed, half-fed levies were dispersed, after hard fighting; and as there was hardly any means of retreat, most of the force was cut to pieces, and few prisoners were made. Among those who had sought refuge in the island, in the hopes of rejoining their father, were the daughters of Count d'Hervily, who at the moment the island was attacked was on board the English fleet superintending the disembarcation of his men in the bay of Quiberon, and who subsequently died of his wounds, perfectly unconscious that his orphan daughters had been driven from their last refuge, their friends killed and dispersed, and they themselves owing their lives to the kindness of a poor fisherman, who had managed to take them off the island and had then left them to their fate, not daring to assist them farther. This was the reason why Admiral Bridport found the island of Noirmoutier garrisoned by the Republican forces, and so well defended as to render any idea of disembarcation

Digitized by Google

a mere act of folly; and the consequences were that the British men-of-war reluctantly hauled off the coast, and ultimately returned to England, the revolted Bretons being left to their fate, and the cause of the king for ever lost in the land which had been its last stronghold. And now, while the Argus is forcing her way through the boiling ocean, death busy on board, and the storm raging around, let us follow the fortunes of the desolate girls, driven from their last shelter, and cast homeless and friendless on the world.

The coasts of Normandy and of Brittany were not in those days thickly studded with towns and villages as they are now. Havre was a flourishing seaport, it is true, but of the smaller towns and watering places which stud the coast but the germs existed. About five miles from the little port of St. Valery, between that town and Dieppe, the cliffs which, with that exception, are high and inaccessible from the beach, suddenly break, the rugged heights, sloping down to the shore, which here forms a little bay. A few trees, sheltered from the rude winds which blow from the ocean, disturb the monotony of the barren line of coast. The few scattered houses have, like the trees, sought the shelter of the sloping hill-sides, and lie nestled at their foot close to the waters of the bay. The rocks and stones, which stretched away to low water mark, and the small boats hauled up on the narrow strip of sand, showed the occupation of those who tenanted the houses, and if more were needed, a few nets hanging from stakes,

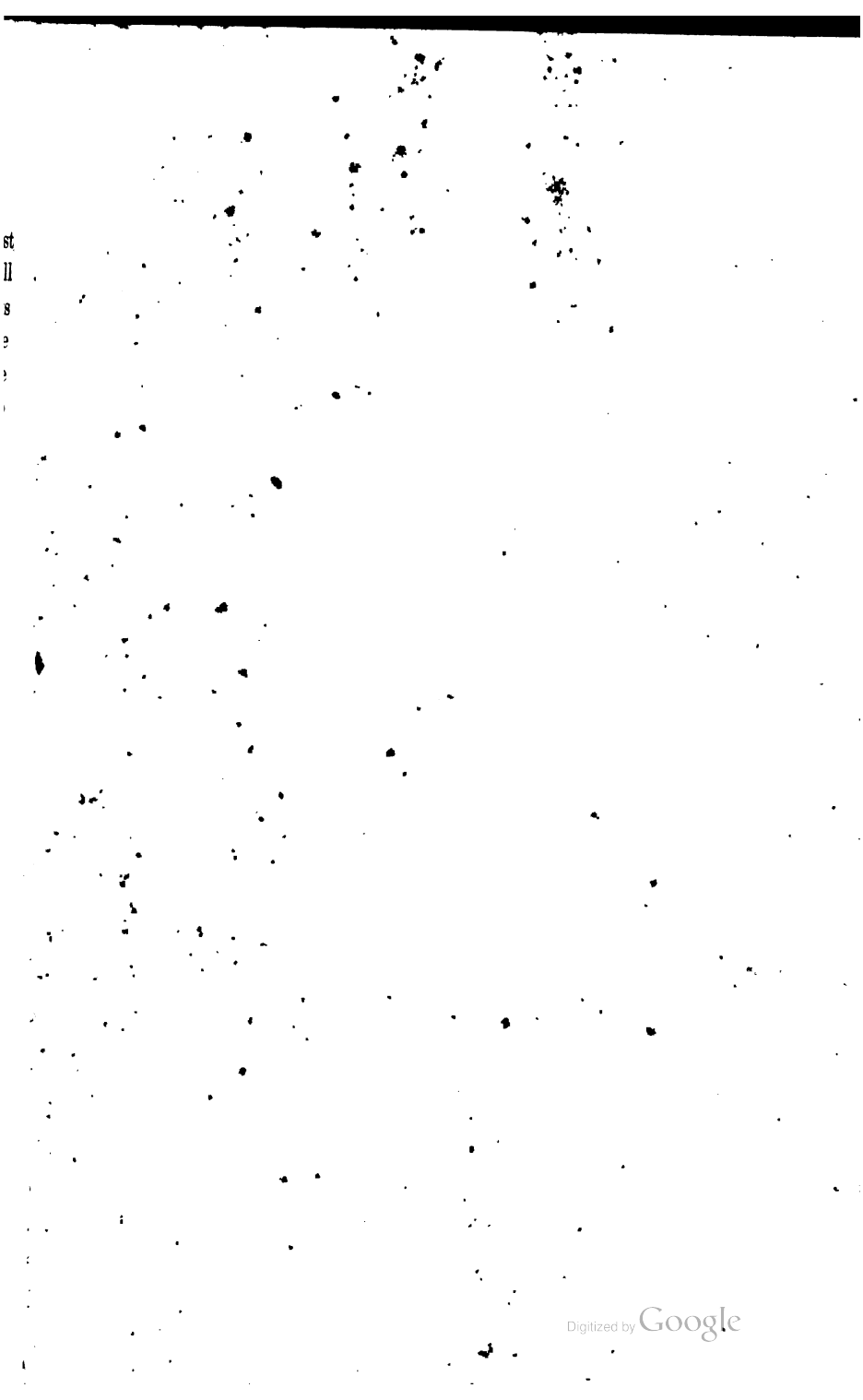
Digitized by Google

and some larger boats fixed firmly on the beach and thatched over, would have told any stranger looking from the heights on to the little bay that the village of Veules was a village of fishermen. The little street was a straggling one, and the houses which lined it were old and wretched-looking. They were mostly thatched with straw, and the smell of rotting fish, little heaps of which lay here and there, was very offensive. Still there was one good house even in the little village of Veules, or rather it had been a good one once, and still retained some little remains of its former grandeur. For instance, there was a rude sculptured coat-of-arms over the doorway, though the door itself had disappeared; there was a large courtyard, round which ran ruined outbuildings, whose roofs had long since fallen in, but which had once contained the horses of some Norman landowner. Two rooms of the old house were even yet habitable, and one of these had been formerly the kitchen of the mansion. It was a large, deserted looking room, its roof composed of beams of oak, its floor of dark stone. It was lighted by but one window, which looked out on the gloomy courtyard, and could boast of little furniture save a low bed in one corner of the large room, two or three rickety chairs, and one old fashioned oak table. The enormous fireplace, which would have held half a cart-load of wood, was black and comfortless looking; a small oil lamp stood on the table, the wick of which protruded from a kind of tube in which it was inserted, and which ran down

Digitized by Google

to the oil in the tin reservoir. It was of the rudest description, and the smoke and smell from it, small as it was, rendered its use highly objectionable. Its light was very feeble, and the far-away corner, where the truckle bed was placed, was in darkness. By the dim light a young girl sat diligently endeavouring to darn a coarse thick stocking. Even in that dim light it was evident that her features were regular and handsome. The luxuriant black hair, dark and glossy as the wing of the raven, was gathered back from her forehead, and loosely pushed into a small net on the back of her head. The forehead, not very high, but broad and massive, perhaps even too much so for regular feminine beauty, was, as well as the whole face, of a clear olive tint, the nose straight and thin, the mouth small, and the eyes, now bent down on her work, black and full of power. Any one looking into those eyes would do so as into a well, not knowing the hidden depths of feeling concealed there, and when excited they would flash and sparkle as the starlight which plays and sparkles on the waters of the well. A coarse red woollen petticoat showed the bare feet below, while the girl's shoulders were covered by a shawl, which must once have belonged to some one in a far different position of life, for, weather-stained and patched, it had evidently been a costly article, though there was nothing surprising in this during that rough period of French history. Outside the house the waves were breaking on the beach with a heavy thud, and the

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

wind was howling around the old gables, bringing down a brick here and a slate there from the ruinous outbuildings, and threatening demolition to the whole fabric.

"It is a rough night," muttered the girl as she put her work down on the table, and taking up the rude lamp rose from her chair. "I wonder is Isabel asleep," she continued, as she made her way across the stone flooring towards the bed. The fine, delicate looking hand which had been handling the coarse woollen stocking would have been remembered by the most casual spectator had there been one, though it, like the shawl, was weather-stained; and now the small, beautiful feet as they moved quite uncovered over the cold floor seemed even more incongruous with the poverty of the apartment.

Shading the light with her hand, the young girl stooped over the bed. If it were her sister, the two bore little likeness to one another, for the girl who lay there, and who had been named Isabel by her companion, was fair, and her eyes were blue as the blue Mediterranean. Her hair, too, was of that tint which is so admired in Italy, and which the French call *cendrée*. But they were sisters over which the light of the rude tin lamp shone at that moment, and that large desolate room—that rude bed and coarse clothing—were all that were left to the daughters of the once powerful noble. Berthe and Isabel d'Hervily had gained St. Valery, after that terrible night when the island of Noirmoutier was

Digitized by Google

stormed by the soldiers of the Republic, and had found after many wanderings a home in the old ruined house, and among the poor fishermen of the remote village of Veules.

Isabel slept, and soundly too, whilst her heavy breathing and an occasional expression of pain which passed across the sleeper's face as the dim light of the lamp streamed over it, told either of recent illness or of great bodily fatigue. Both had contributed their quota. The little money the sisters had possessed when their only refuge was snatched from them, and the convent on the island of Noirmoutier stormed and taken by the Republican army, had soon melted away. Their object had been to make their way to St. Valery-en-Caux, where they knew that an old man, half farmer half fisherman, lived, who being secretly a friend to the Royalist cause had lent the use of his house near the jetty on more than one occasion to their father, and who in former days had been his debtor for some important kindness. Their slender purse gave out long before they reached their destination, but sometimes they procured shelter and food at the small farms on their route, at others this was denied them, and their way across the fertile plains of Brittany and Normandy was a painful one, indeed, to two girls who had been accustomed to Parisian luxury, and a life of gaiety and amusement. Ultimately they reached St. Valery, but when they presented themselves at the house near the jetty, where Count d'Hervily was first

Digitized by Google

introduced to the reader, the old man, owner of the place, received them with tears in his eyes. They were, indeed, in a piteous state, and though the elder sister Berthe had, from her more energetic character and her age, been able better to sustain trial and privation, Isabel was rapidly sinking under it; and when the old farmer, who dared not retain the children of his former benefactor, the proscribed *emigré* noble, in his house, offered them the protection of the old tumble-down mansion on his farm in the quiet village of Veules, it was eagerly accepted. The five miles which separated the two places was a sore trial to the already wearied Isabel, yet any conveyance, even had such been available, which it was not, would have brought upon the girls the charge of belonging to the aristocracy.

The old farmer had some little furniture in the two rooms already described, for twice a year he spent some days there. The outer door, over which the sculptured armorial bearings remained, had long mouldered away; but the kitchen boasted a door and a lock, and the two sisters, abandoning the upper room, had located themselves entirely in the lower. The old farmer was miserably poor himself, and as he could do no more, the sisters were forced to work for a living. A scanty one they obtained by following the receding tide, and picking up among the rocks and pools of salt water the small shell-fish left by it. This was sold from door to door, in the markets of Dieppe and St. Valery; but the life

Digitized by Google

was one almost insupportable to girls nursed in the midst of luxury, and though Berthe, who was barely nineteen, took upon herself the hardest part of the toil, exposing herself in all weathers to gain the few shell-fish which Isabel sold from door to door, still the latter had fallen ill again, and no medicines could be procured.

A successful day might bring in the sum of ten to twelve sous; but this did not always happen, and when the wind was high and the waves broke in thunder on the rocky coast, as it did now, hunger and starvation looked into the desolate kitchen of the tumble-down house at Veules. A tear trickled down the clear olive-brown cheek of the elder sister as she turned from the bed, and her breast heaved convulsively as she walked away, and endeavoured to light a few bits of wood gathered together in the enormous fire-place.

A knock at the door interrupted her, and when, lamp in hand, she opened it, the feeble light showed her the figure of a man standing outside; and it was one, too, apparently known to her. The new comer might be about twenty years of age—was dressed in the blue uniform of the line, wearing a sergeant's chevrons. Strongly built, his brown weather-beaten complexion and fair hair, did not help to set off a face for which nature had never done much. A broad and rather prominent forehead; grey eyes, surmounted by shaggy eyebrows; a nose slightly retroussé; a mouth large, but when the lips were

Digitized by Google

parted showing a row of fine white teeth, completed the picture of Sergeant Jules Lacroix, commanding the Republican forces at Veules. His army consisted of a corporal and ten men, and with these he had to guard the coast line from St. Valery to Veules. He carried a bundle of wood in his hand which he laid down inside the door.

"Good night, ma'm'selle; I have brought you some wood which I picked up on my round this afternoon," said Jules. "May I light the fire?"

Now the soldier of the Republic had no right to use the term mademoiselle, for all such aristocratic titles had been abolished by the Convention; but Jules had a shrewd suspicion that the two sisters were not quite what they seemed to be; and besides his broad, good-humoured face, and quick grey eye, always looked merrier and more good-humoured when Isabel was near.

"Tiens," added he, taking up his bundle and walking on tiptoe towards the fire-place, "there is not a spark of fire this cold, windy night."

"Don't make a noise, Jules, Isabel is asleep, and I don't want her wakened," said the elder sister, as she drew a screen made of the remains of a sail, which was so arranged as to separate the portion of the room where the little bed was from the larger space. The sergeant going down on his knees before the fire-place began to get together the wood, lighting it and adding to it from his own store. There were not any bellows, but he had those nature had

Digitized by Google

given him, and the little fire soon crackled in the fire-place, while Berthe got together the two or three odds and ends of crockery which had been left in the old house to serve the farmer's purposes when business called him there.

The fire burned, the earthen vessel which contained the soup was placed near it to warm, and gathering her shawl round her, Berthe resumed her work.

Sergeant Jules remained a few minutes looking at his fire with the air of one perfectly satisfied with his work.

"Well, ma'm'selle," he said, at length, in a low tone, "I suppose you are for St. Valery to-morrow; but is it not a pity to leave Ma'm'selle Isabel alone, and she so ill."

"And what am I to do, Jules?" answered the girl, the hand that held the coarse stocking dropping on her knee. "Next week I shall have some needle-work to do, but I have none this, and one must live."

"True, Ma'm'selle Berthe, but you would have no need to live thus if you choose."

"What do you mean, Jules? God knows I would alter this state of things if I could."

"Well, ma'm'selle, we have not known each other long, but, ma foi, in these days life is often too short to stand on ceremony in every day intercourse. Now, look you, I am not twenty-one yet. I am a sergeant, and may soon be an officer. I love Ma'm'selle Isabel, and have done so from the moment I saw

Digitized by Google

her. Will she marry me? If she will, vive la Republique, I'll make her happy and you too."

"Hush, Jules, not so loud, you will wake Isabel," said the girl, whose flushed face and heaving bosom showed that poverty and trial had not conquered the proud blood which now rushed impetuously through her veins, at the thought of a sergeant daring to entertain these views. Poor girl! she forgot that at this moment a sergeant's position was as greatly superior to her own, as hers had been immeasurably above his. The thought of her absent father, and the certainty she felt of his success came to her; and that this success would bring with it the restoration of the royal race—which restoration would be principally her father's work, added to these feelings. Still she felt that she was in no condition to quarrel with her sister's suitor, for though but in command of ten men, he was in command there, and besides that many a little act of kindness received from him, many a cheering word spoken, was remembered by her, and though her dark eyes flashed, her voice was low and sweet as she replied:

"Nay, Jules, this is cruel of you; my sister is ill, in all probability will be ill for some time, besides it is for her to answer, not for me."

"Well, but, ma'm'selle, if she would only say yes, or if you would say it for her, there's no need of any hurry, and you would not mind sharing my pay then. I don't want it, and I've got a few sous put by beside. I could offer then what I dare not now."

Digitized by Google

This was, indeed, humiliation for Count d'Hervily's daughter. The simple kindness of the honest soldier, who, with the feelings of a gentleman, forbore to press help upon her, because he felt it would in the relation they were to each other be inadmissable, humiliated and wounded her proud nature. Her eyes flashed as she looked into his face, and the hot blood suffused her cheeks; but there was the broad, good-humoured look—the clear eyes from which a tear was dropping down the rough weather-beaten cheek, and there was an earnestness about the man which disarmed her.

"We will talk of this another day, Jules. You must give me time to think and to talk to Isabel."

"Ay, but, ma'm'selle, I may not be here long. There are strange rumours about."

"Rumours, what are they?" Berthe eagerly asked.

"It is said the English have landed somewhere near Belle Isle, and that the country is in their possession: that a strong body of the *emigrés* under Monsieur de Sombreuil and D'Hervily, backed by an English force, are in full march for Paris, to dictate terms to the Convention and destroy the Republic, and that France will need all her soldiers to help her."

A flash of fierce joy shot from Berthe's eyes; but she had presence of mind sufficient to repress all outward signs of emotion. Her heart beat quick, and her lips moved, as she murmured, "My dear, my

Digitized by Google

glorious father! with such men to support it, the good cause must triumph."

At this moment a rustling behind the curtain, and the low tones of the sick girl as she called on her sister were heard.

"There, Jules, I must go. You have given me strange tidings and much to think of, and, now, good night!"

"Bon soir, ma'm'selle. I will come and see you to-morrow after your return;" and the poor fellow, turning one long, anxious look first towards Berthe, as she sat, the work having dropped from her hand on the floor, and her eyes gazing into the flame of the burning wood, walked towards the door. His hand was on the handle, when the low tones of the sick girl arrested him.

"Who are you talking to, Berthe? and why don't you come to me? I hear nothing but your smothered voices and the howling of the wind, and it makes my head ache."

Heaving a deep sigh, Berthe rose, and, putting back one corner of the rude curtain—"It is Jules Lacroix, sister," she said. "He has brought us some wood, and has been helping me to light the fire, and get our supper ready."

"Has he?" replied Isabel. "Oh, then, I understand the low tones, and perhaps I ought not to have awoke so soon. Eh, sister? Good night, Sergeant Jules," she called out. "Good night, and thank you!"

Digitized by Google

"Good night, and God bless you, Ma'm'selle Isabel!" replied the poor fellow, as he closed the door after himself, and went away through the driving sleet and the roaring tempest, his step light, and his sturdy, honest heart gladdened by the cheerful good night and silver tones of her he loved. He stopped soon, and remained utterly insensible to the cold wind and pelting rain, as he stood watching the feeble light which flickered from the diamond-paned window.

"I'll win her yet," he muttered, as he turned at last, and took his way towards the heights, where his duty called him. "These are stirring times," he thought, as he breasted the steep ascent, and the violence of the gale broke full upon him; "and who knows, I may soon exchange the woollen epaulet for one of bullion, and then who knows—ay, who knows where I may stop?"

A dull, heavy thud, mixed with the roar of the waves below him, came on to his ear. The sergeant paused, and, shading his eyes with his weather-beaten hand, looked into the black night to seaward. A flash of light in the far-away distance, faint and feeble, was seen; and before the deadened sound came upon his ear, a second and a third flash were visible, and as the sergeant buffeted his way along the heights several flashes from the same quarter told of either a vessel in sore distress on that tempestuous night, or of the anger of man making itself heard amidst the strife of the elements.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

THE GALE.

THE little lugger, close-hauled, was struggling through the tremendous seas off Alderney, her lugs reduced to the smallest possible size, with her storm jib hardly bigger than a good-sized pocket-handkerchief, lifting her over the waves as she plunged into the green seas, dashing them aside with her sharp bows. The gale, which raged in the English Channel, was one which rendered the year 1795 memorable in the naval annals of the country; for it was little short of a hurricane, and strewed the coast with wrecks. Many hundred dead bodies were picked up here and there along the coast, and in the interior, just as the storm was at its height, sweeping over the sea, and covering it with wrecks, while on land trees and houses fell before its fury, the shock of an earthquake was felt.

The wind was north-west, jamming the lugger down on to the French coast, and every now and then a larger sea than common would strike her on the bows, and, tumbling in on her decks, flood them with the clear green water, rolling away into her lee-scuppers, to fall once more into the angry sea, lashed

Digitized by Google

into fury by this memorable gale. Not a soul remained on deck save the watch, while lumbered up as the lugger was below with the wounded and maimed of the disastrous Quiberon expedition, the tremendous pitching of the craft as she gallantly met the heavy seas, added to the usual discomforts consequent on a heavy gale to so small a vessel. The gale was at its height when, just as the Argus rose on the crest of a huge wave, the cry of "Sail, ho!" from the forecastle was heard, and the lieutenant of the watch, holding on by the weather shrouds, was endeavouring to make out the strange sail.

"Here, run forward, youngster, and see if you can make her out," shouted the lieutenant on duty to one of the watch on deck, a fine, healthy-looking young seaman of not more than seventeen years.

A heavy gun to windward borne down on the gale towards the lugger showed she had been seen; while the lad holding on by the rigging watched for a moment when he could make his way forward with more chance of safety. Hardly had he quitted his hold to execute his errand, when the loud voice of the lieutenant was heard, lifted in warning. A huge sea was rolling towards the lugger, crested with white foam, and, as the little craft buried her sharp bows in the monster wave, tons of water were poured on her deck, and for an instant the Argus seemed to pause in her onward way through the fierce ocean waves, and her very timbers to quiver with the shock she had received.

Digitized by Google

The fearful cry of a "man overboard" sounded through the ship; and, rising on the crest of the wave, looking more like a cork on the boiling foam than a human being, the head of the poor lad, who had been caught in the very act of running forward, was seen tossed to and fro like sea-weed in the foam.

"Stand by to lower away the gig!" shouted the lieutenant of the watch, as he sprang into the rigging, and hove with all a seaman's readiness a coil of loose rope in the direction of the drowning man. Lightly the rope flew to leeward; but the lugger was going some six knots, and, quick as was the movement, it was too late. The lad saw the rope as it drove towards him, his hands were extended in the vain endeavour to grasp it, the look of agony in his eyes as the end lashed the water full two feet short of him, were seen; his shrill scream was heard, as, surging onwards, the lugger once more buried her bows in the green sea, and the drowning man's head was seen no longer.

"Stand fast!" shouted the loud, clear voice of the captain, as he stepped on deck from the cabin, in which he had just received the French noble's last wish. "Stand fast, my lads! come out of that boat; it is useless! Mr. Dawes, send the men aft; no boat could live in this sea, and poor Roberts is no longer living. What ship is that to windward?"

In the hurry and excitement consequent on the terrible cry of a man overboard, the strange sail had

Digitized by Google

been forgotten. She was now made out to be a large frigate; but whether French or English was unknown.

"Shall we show our colours, Captain Goodwin?" asked the lieutenant.

"Ay, ay!" answered the former, as steadying himself in the weather-shrouds by passing an arm through, and twining one leg in them, he endeavoured to make out the stranger with his glass. It was a task of no small difficulty; for, besides the heavy pitching of the lugger, the frigate herself, though naturally steadier, rose and fell on the huge waves, so that at times only her black hull was perceptible. The English Union Jack had been streaming out for some minutes, and yet no notice seemed to be taken of it. It was a position of no small danger, jammed down as the lugger was on a lee-shore, with such a gale blowing, should the strange sail prove to be French, and Captain Goodwin gazed long and anxiously for the answering signal. It came, at last. A puff of white smoke was blown from the bows of the stranger, and the French tricolor waved from the mizen-peak. A moment later, and the frigate's bows fell off as she edged away towards the lugger.

Watching the roll of his ship, the captain of the Argus swung himself on deck, and hardly had his feet touched it than he gave his orders.

"Beat to quarters. How does she bear by the compass?"

Digitized by Google

"Almost dead a-beam of us, sir," replied the lieutenant.

"Very well: call the watch, shake out a reef from the lugs, and send the quartermaster to the wheel!"

"She will never bear it, sir," said the lieutenant, as he at once proceeded to obey the orders given, and the boatswain's pipe was heard above the roaring of the gale, calling on the watch and idlers to make sail.

At this moment Mr. Edwards, the first lieutenant, appeared on deck, and, after a glance at the compass, a second one aloft, and then a long steady gaze to windward, he took his place by the captain's side.

"Well, Mr. Edwards, what do you make of her?" asked Captain Goodwin.

"A heavy frigate, and a Frenchman," replied the officer addressed. "I should think a forty-gun ship, at least, and what could have placed her in that position directly a-beam and to windward of us, I don't know."

At this moment the loud flapping of the lug sails, as the reef was shaken out, drowned the speaker's voice, and one or two heavy seas striking the lugger, the service became one of great danger. It was done, however; the lugs again hoisted, and once more the Argus lay her course. Madly plunging into the green seas, as the wind acted on the increased surface of sail now shown to the gale,

Digitized by Google

the craft almost buried herself in the water, the tall masts trembled, and for fully ten minutes the two officers watched her, expecting every moment to see the masts go: but, no; the little lugger held her way gallantly, burying her bows in the waves, it is true, and deluging her decks with water, but not a rope failed.

Captain Goodwin rubbed his hands.

"We shall weather on her, Edwards; the little Argus eats into the wind, and though we must pass within reach of her battery, she will never hit the little dancing craft with this sea on."

The first lieutenant shook his head, pointing as he did so to the heavy masses of clouds gathering to windward.

The reader will understand that the two ships were gradually approaching each other, the heavier, having the wind free, came rolling and surging along, her dark hull sometimes disappearing between the waves, and only the tall tracery of her spars visible from the lugger's decks; at others, tossed high on some monster wave, showing her bright and glittering coppers to the very keel. The lugger, jammed hard up on a wind, was meeting the seas, and, forced through them by the heavy press of canvas she was carrying, pitched into the waves, and, though behaving well and gallantly, her progress was slow. the French frigate, with her three top-sails close-reefed, making comparatively fine weather of it.

The two vessels were fast nearing each other, and

Digitized by Google

the lugger could not avoid receiving the fire of the frigate; but the sea was so high that Captain Goodwin calculated on the uncertainty of aim; and, in fact, it was his only chance; for Cherbourg and its forts lay to leeward of him, and he must work to windward or prepare for a French prison. An hour passed, while the two officers continued pacing the deck, the crew on board the Argus remaining at quarters.

"Send the men to supper, Mr. Edwards," said the captain, "and have an extra glass of grog served out. They will need it."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the lieutenant.

Evening was drawing on, there would be no moon. Everything stood well on board the lugger, and once more hope dawned on those aboard her.

"We are within reach of her guns, Edwards—every moment helps us; if we can once more weather on her, I'll back the Argus to give her the slip. I wonder would the hussey bear another reef out of her mainsail?"

"Impossible, Captain Goodwin," said the lieutenant, impressively. "There are now three men at the wheel, and it jerks enough to tear it from the rudder-post."

A gun from the frigate, followed by the discharge of her main-deck battery, interrupted them. Anxiously the two glanced at their spars, but not a rope was touched. The Frenchman had fired just as the frigate fell with a long roll into the sea—

Digitized by Google

the iron shower striking the wave, and glancing upwards.

"Beat to quarters, Mr. Edwards; the men have had time enough," said the captain. "Now comes the moment which decides our fate. In half-an-hour we shall laugh at that lubberly Frenchman, or we shall be at the bottom."

Again the lugger received the frigate's fire, and again she passed on unharmed. Luckily for her, many of the Frenchman's main-deck guns were useless in the heavy sea, and Goodwin laughed as he glanced at his spars untouched by the enemy's shot.

"Sail, ho!" shouted the look-out once more.

"Where away?" asked the captain, the smile of exultation passing from his lips.

"Broad on the weather-bow, sir; a heavy frigate. She is signalling the stranger."

It was too true. Three small flags, with a distinguishing pennant, were flying on board the frigate, and being quickly hauled down, had been evidently answered; so that the fresh sail was without doubt a consort of the frigate which now had the lugger under her fire, and should the Argus succeed in passing her foe, it would but be to fall into the clutches of her consort.

"Keep her away, Mr. Edwards; let her go through the water," shouted Captain Goodwin. "Shake out another reef in the foresail."

"Ay, ay, sir;" was the ready response, as the lieutenant gave the necessary orders.

Digitized by Google

"Quartermaster, bring her three masts into one, and keep her so," continued the captain. "Mr. Edwards, step down with me to the cabin; I am going to prick off the ship's position on the chart."

The change for the better was at once apparent. The gallant little lugger no longer laboured along, meeting the heavy seas with her bows, but with the wind over her quarter slipped easily over the waves, which no longer broke on board her so frequently; though now and then a little water would be necessarily shipped.

The French frigate however was gaining on her fast, and the smoke cloud once more blew out from her decks, and the roar of the guns was added to the whistling of the gale, as both wind and shot tore past the lugger's rigging. One shot struck her, tearing along her decks, and going out through her bow, killed two of her crew; but the frigate lost ground by firing, and did not renew the attempt. Her mainsail, close-reefed, was now set; a reef shaken out of her fore topsail, and the little flags fluttering in her rigging, showed she was once more signalling her consort in order to cut off the privateer's escape. Soon a bow-gun was brought to bear, but in such a sea aim was impossible, and after three or four discharges it was given up.

Night slowly crept on, throwing its dark veil over the raging ocean; leaving the French frigate a good two miles astern of her chase, with her consort far away to windward. But a stern chase is a long one, and what Captain Goodwin feared most was the lee-

Digitized by Google

shore—which was an enemy's coast as well—towards which he was running.

It was nearly midnight when the two officers once more appeared on deck, and the lugger running free, had long since passed the port of Cherbourg, and was off the mouth of the Seine, with Havre de Grâce under her lee unpleasantly near. Nothing had been seen of the strange sail; indeed it was no easy task in that thick darkness, and with so heavy a sea, to use the night glass at all; and the ships might be close together, yet not distinguish each other.

"Bring her to the wind, Mr. Edwards; but not a light must be shown," said the captain. "Close reef the two lugs, and send four men to the wheel. It is our only chance."

It was done, the ship made as snug for the night as circumstances would permit, and rolled in their cloaks or in old sails, the watch, with the officers—the captain included—lay under the shelter of the slight bulwarks; hoping that by their manœuvre, executed under cover of the thick darkness, their relentless enemies would slip past them in the night.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

SHIPWRECK.

MORNING dawned slowly and drearily over the seething ocean: the cold grey light struggling with the thick darkness and the heavy masses of grey cloud which the gale rolled before it at a tremendous speed. The wind during the night had drawn more towards the northward and was piercingly cold, and so strong that it cut the tops of the waves as though with a knife, carrying the salt water with it in fine particles, and with such force as to cause smarting pain to any who were exposed to its fury.

The situation of the lugger had become worse, for she now had the land dead under her lee, and the wind blowing right on shore. The cliffs, too, were high and precipitous; and unless she could claw off shore she was in a dangerous situation, as no anchor could hold against such a wind and sea. Still, her weatherly qualities were such that, left to herself even in such a hurricane, little anxiety would have been felt by her crew. Captain Goodwin, too, knew every inch of the coast; and it was for this reason, and the remarkable sailing qualities of the lugger, that he had been selected for the hazardous service, in the

Digitized by Google

performance of which he had anchored off the port of St. Valery to receive on board the *emigré* noble. Twenty of the wounded insurgents had died during the night, and many more lay at the point of death; the pain of their wounds sadly aggravated by the violent shocks experienced by the lugger as she worked to windward. The dead had met with scant ceremony, and when the surgeon had assured himself that life no longer existed, had been sent over the side to find a grave under the salt waves. The body of the late Count still lay where he had died—in the captain's cabin.

Captain Goodwin and his first lieutenant had not slept, and now paced the deck of the dancing craft, anxiously waiting for the coming light. It came slowly and feebly: now just enabling the tumbling seas close ahead to be distinguished, now creeping over the raging waters, and showing the green waves crested with foam further and further to seaward.

To leeward lay the line of high cliffs, faint and ghost-like, but not ten miles distant; while to seaward the heavy masses of cloud: yet pressed down on the sea by the force of the gale, allowed a very limited field of vision.

"Forward, there!" hailed the Captain; "keep a good look-out. Send a man aloft, Mr. Edwards; let him lash himself in the rigging."

The order was complied with, and again the two paced the little deck, eagerly looking to seaward, and

Digitized by Google

almost blinded by the dashing of the salt spray in their faces.

"We have dropped them this time, Mr. Edwards; and I don't think the wind so strong as it was. If it would only veer a couple of points to the westward, we would soon lose sight of those cliffs."

"Sail, ho!" shouted the man who had just been sent aloft.

"Where away, and what do you make her out?"

"A heavy frigate, on the same tack as ourselves, sir, under her three close-reefed topsails and spanker," was the reply.

Sail, ho! now was heard from the forecastle as the look-out there caught sight of the strange sail, the light of the day becoming more and more powerful.

Calling for his glass, Captain Goodwin took a long, steady look. Yes, there she was, rising and falling on the waves, now shipping a heavy sea, which poured in over her bows to roll away into the lee scuppers, the same frigate whose fire they had received the previous day; and where was her consort? Captain Goodwin's glass vainly swept the horizon, but except the two vessels named not a sail was visible. "Let the men breakfast, and we can then go to quarters; it will be time enough," said the Captain. "The lubberly Frenchman does not see us, and if we had only a little fog we would easily slip by him."

The order given, the different messes went to their morning meal as best they could, the morning watch,

Digitized by Google

together with the captain and first lieutenant, alone remaining on deck.

"We have nothing for it, Edwards, but to hold on. We have had the worst of the gale, and if once we can weather on the frigate, we may laugh at her," said the captain.

"I wonder where her consort is," replied the officer.

"Doubtless looking for us somewhere off Boulogne. The signals we saw last night gave her instructions to carry on the same course we were then sailing, while the captain of yonder frigate, suspecting our manœuvre, did precisely the same thing as ourselves, keeping his weatherly position."

"I suppose it must be so," muttered the other. "In either case one of them must have had us, but they have not taken the little Argus yet."

"Ha! they see us now, the lubbers. There goes a reef out of their topsails," said the captain.

It was indeed so. Shaking out a reef, the frigate edged away slightly, so as to bring her down upon the very line the lugger must take, and yet without losing the advantage the weather-gage which she now held afforded her. About eight miles of water separated the two vessels, and the lugger was making about seven knots an hour, eating into the wind. Nothing more could be done, she having already more sail than she could safely carry. Two hours passed, the captain remaining on deck the whole time. The decks had been cleared for action, every rope was

Digitized by Google

coiled down, the hatches were on, and but for the large ship to windward, which, with the French tricolor flying at her mizen peak, was slowly but surely nearing the lugger, there would have been nothing more to be noticed than what is ordinarily seen on board a privateer of her class in a heavy gale at sea. The weather had cleared, and though perhaps the gale was not quite so strong, the sea was very trying for so small a vessel as the Argus.

"Beat to quarters, Mr. Edwards, the Frenchman is not above a mile to windward. If our good luck helps us, we may yet escape," said the captain.

"Shall we cast loose the guns and send up the ammunition?" asked the lieutenant.

"No," replied his superior officer. "What is the use of firing? If it were anything near our size a chance shot might save us, but that is a forty-four gun frigate, and we must trust to the chapter of accidents. This heavy sea, though against the lugger's sailing, is our best chance of safety now."

On board the Frenchman all was quiet. The men were at quarters, the hammocks piped down. On the quarter-deck of the French Republican forty-four gun frigate, L'Aigle, stood her captain and officers, who, despite nationality and prejudice, could not help admiring the undaunted courage and determination which could induce a small lugger showing a battery of ten guns to pass under the fire of the frigate's armament.

"Fire the forecastle gun," was the order given on

Digitized by Google

board the Aigle; "begin from forward and aim at her rigging."

The real danger to the lugger was only now beginning, as gun after gun was discharged with slow and deliberate aim.

"Hurrah, my lads!" shouted the captain, as shot after shot plunged into the water wide of the mark, and the long, low black hull of the Argus bearing aloft the tall rakish spars, with their rags of sails, still plunged on through the waves. "Hurrah, my lads! we'll weather on her yet."

The French seemed alive to the danger of the lugger's escape, and their admiration of the courage which led her to make the attempt, was evidently changed into fear lest it should prove successful.

The flashes from the frigate's guns came quicker and quicker, and a few ropes dangling here and there, with a streak of white above the water-line attested the accuracy of the aim. Still the lugger was creeping ahead, and the great difficulty of hitting the low hull of so small a craft in such a sea became fully apparent. In another quarter of an hour the vessels would be abeam, and from that moment the chances of the lugger's escape would be materially increased. Suddenly the Aigle ceased firing, and with a broad sheer, yawed down on her pigmy opponent.

For a moment Captain Goodwin thought the frigate would have run them down, as grasping the weather shrouds he drew a long breath for the plunge. A cry of alarm was heard through the craft, as, borne on a

Digitized by Google

monster wave, the frigate came swooping on them. The next moment her bows came gracefully up to the wind, and the lugger lay under her guns, the fire of the French marines raining on her decks.

"Lie down; down every man of you," roared the captain in a voice heard above the howling of the storm. There was barely time for this order to be obeyed, for at that moment the whole of the frigate's main-deck guns poured their fire into the lugger, and as the smoke blew to leeward, showed her with her rigging cut to pieces, and her mainmast with all its gear hanging over her side.

For a moment Captain Goodwin's eye glanced over the ruin of his hopes. The next his active, resolute mind was at work. Several of the men lay on deck dead or wounded, but there was no time for help. The little vessel had only been saved from destruction by the order given on board the Aigle to fire at her spars.

"Keep her away, quartermaster; put her before the wind," shouted Goodwin. "Mr. Edwards, cut away the wreck of the mainmast. Tell the carpenter to sound the well. Out axes, my lads, cut away cheerily." The lugger was now heading for land, and flying before the gale. The Frenchman had ceased his fire, but was edging away towards the wreck, while the fallen mainmast was bumping against the lugger's sides, threatening every moment to stave them in.

Calling the first lieutenant to his side, Captain

Digitized by Google

Goodwin addressed him in those low, firm tones which come naturally to the determined spirit in the moment of extreme danger.

"We have nothing for it but to run for shore, where the frigate dare not follow us. See the anchors cleared and all ready. We are off the coast between St. Valery and Boulogne, and the anchorage-ground is good. If we can hold our own, a jury mainmast and a dark night may still carry us clear. How many men have we lost?"

"The boatswain and ten men," answered the lieutenant, "and nearly double that number wounded."

The wreck of the mainmast now floated clear of the lugger, which was running rapidly before the wind, the French frigate apparently sure of her destruction, and being herself in a dangerous situation, on a lee shore, now hauled up close to the wind, and, as she did so, once more discharged her main-deck battery, adding a few more splinter wounds to the long list of dying and dead on board the lugger. Satisfied with the havoc she had caused, and shaking a reef out of her main topsail, she stood on her course, eventually fetching Boulogne. An hour had passed. On board the lugger the dead had been disposed of, the wounded sent below, some of the most dangerous shot-holes imperfectly plugged, more sail shown on the foremast, to prevent the low craft being pooped by the seas which now followed her, and everything that could be done to ensure the anchors holding had been carried out. On rushed

Digitized by Google

the little craft, the coast line right ahead of her, not three miles away. Four men were at the wheel, and beside them stood the first lieutenant and the officers of the ship. The captain was on the forecastle conning the lugger, for none on board knew the coast as he did. Before him lay the high, precipitous cliffs, against which the waves broke in thunder, sending the spray fifty feet up into the air, in one compact white mass. The lugger's bows were kept for a little opening in the cliffs, where they trended on either side towards the beach, which was sandy in this spot only, and where the white houses of a little village could be seen nestled between the cliffs. Near the captain stood a group of seamen, one of whom, the carpenter, held an axe in his hand, ready for use. A sudden squall of wind passed over the waves, it neared the flying lugger, howling and whistling over her in its fury, as it tore her through the water towards the land. The sea was white with foam, the wind carrying the salt spray with it, and dashing it over the vessel. The captain made a sign, and the carpenter had just raised his hand to cut away the seizings which held the cable, when, unable to bear the furious hurricane which was now upon her, with a loud, splintering crash the foremast went over the side.

"Let go the anchor!" roared Goodwin; but the carpenter and four men had been struck down by the falling mast, and the rest seemed paralyzed with fear. Springing to the spot, Goodwin himself seized

Digitized by Google

an axe, but it was too late, for the lugger broached to, and a tremendous sea striking her on her broadside, buried her bodily beneath the waves. A loud, despairing cry rose above the roaring of the sea and the howling of the tempest. It was the death-shriek of half the crew; and as the black, disfigured hull rose once more on the waves, the broken spars and torn planks were dashed to and fro, killing and maiming the poor wretches who clung to them for safety. Again the mountain seas came on, dashing the lugger towards the coast, and rolling the pieces of wreck, with the men who clung to them, over and over, burying them beneath the foam, while broken planks, ends of ropes and rigging, casks, and human bodies struggling in agony, were borne away, like feathers before their fury.

The beach near the little village of Veules, towards whose narrow, sandy indentation, for it is not worthy the name of bay, Captain Goodwin had steered his vessel, presented a strange sight. Far as the eye could reach, the shore was covered more than an inch deep with the foam, blown up by the wind, the sand and stones looking as though buried in snow. The air was filled with it, and the white patches lay thickly on the fields beyond. On the beach below were gathered the whole male population of the place, and the hardy fishermen had bound themselves together with ropes, forming a line extending into the water, the foremost man among them being the Republican sergeant. Sea after sea struck the

Digitized by Google

doomed lugger, pressing her down on the shore. Again the wild death-shriek was heard, as with a splintering crash the strained hull was ground down on the beach, and the waves broke in all their fury upon her. This could not last many moments, and soon the sea was covered with floating wreck of all descriptions, mixed pell-mell with the forms of the drowning crew, battling for dear life among the débris, and disappearing one by one. On shore the sergeant's efforts were those of a man who was used to peril his own life in the service of others. Now dashed down by the waves, and rolled over and over in the sand, his life was only saved by means of the rope to which he was attached, and yet not a man had been rescued. Just at this moment a larger piece of wreck than usual was borne towards the beach. The forms of two men were seen clinging to it, but they were evidently exhausted. The sergeant's cheering cry was heard above the noise of the elements, as he recklessly undid the rope, which, though it impeded his movements, had already saved him more than once. The receding wave had now carried the piece of wreck with the figures clinging to it away to sea again. Jules watched its progress, as a giant wave came thundering on from seaward. It struck the timber, rolling it over and over, and bearing it on towards the beach in one mass of frothy foam. Clearing his hair from his eyes, the sergeant dashed forward. He seized the wreck, but his efforts were useless, the ebb of the wave draw-

Digitized by Google

ing it away. The fishermen, excited by the scene, now dashed into the raging sea. Some went down; Jules himself was rolled to and fro, like a pebble on the beach. All to him was riot and confusion, the salt sea rolling over him, and filling his eyes and mouth; the next moment he was on the beach, and beside him, the centre of a group of fishermen, lay the apparently inanimate bodies of the captain of the Argus and of a boy midshipman. These two were all that were left of as gallant a crew of officers and men as ever sailed, and even these were not yet rescued from death. Maimed, bruised, and perfectly senseless, they were carried towards the village. Sergeant Jules followed with two of his ribs broken, taking his way, weak and weary, to his quarters, while the two rescued seamen were borne towards the little farm-house, and placed in the room, unoccupied by the tenants of the kitchen, while all the medical skill the remote village could muster was put into use to discover whether the two survivors of the wreck were living or dead.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

TWO YEARS AFTERWARDS.

Two years had passed and had brought with them but little change in the situation of the two sisters.

Goodwin had slowly recovered, to find the only one who had escaped the wreck of the Argus, save himself, so fearfully injured as to leave little chance of surviving, while he himself was a prisoner on parole. His comrade in misfortune died, and was buried in the little churchyard of Veules, and Goodwin became the sole companion of the two poor girls, who, though French by birth, were in reality exiles like himself. But few of the bodies of the drowned seamen were recovered, for, except at the very spot where the lugger had taken the ground the rocks were high and precipitous, and anything which the sea dashed against them would be ground to powder. The two sisters knew nothing of their father's death, further than what rumour asserted in regard to the disastrous finale of the Quiberon expedition, and rumour said that the Count d'Hervily, sorely wounded, had been conveyed on board a ship of the English fleet. Goodwin saved nothing from the wreck, except the papers given him by the dying

Digitized by Google

noble, which had been on his person at the time of the catastrophe which closed the career of the Argus, and though the sergeant had taken his parole willingly, reporting him to his superiors as the simple seaman he supposed him to be, yet, like all others in the poverty-stricken village, Goodwin had to earn his daily living as well as he could. This was no difficult task for a man like him, and gradually the aspect of the little farm-house was changed for the better. The small garden attached to it, which had formerly been a wild, luxuriant mass of weeds, was now well cultivated; the doors and windows of the rooms occupied by the two sisters and himself were repaired; many rude articles of furniture, fashioned by the sailor's hands, had been added to the place, and some of these possessed a great interest for the paroled prisoner, for they were formed from the planks of the Argus. No need now for either of the sisters exposing themselves to the wintry blasts, to gain a living on the beach. The fishing-boat that contained the Englishman was sure of a good day's work, and Goodwin could always have his choice, and his share of the profits. His cheerful, active disposition easily adapting itself to his position, fitted in with the French character, and he was a favourite with all. The poor village people had found out, that though the two girls were not very hardy where hard work was needed, though they did little when the boats had to be hauled up on the beach, through a heavy surf, or at spreading out and

Digitized by Google

cleaning the large nets, yet they could make nets and could mend them. This became talked of, and soon lighter work came in upon them from Dieppe and St. Valery, and the rude days when hunger and cold had been known, were forgotten by the two sisters, or, if remembered, were thought of as events of the past, which could never return.

With all these elements of returning comfort around her, the face of the elder sister still bore signs of anxiety, and she often seemed preoccupied and thoughtful. The remembrance of her father, absent in a strange land, perhaps ill and suffering, without any relative to console him; their own situation, which, though ameliorated, was still a very precarious one; and her sister's health, for Isabel had never properly recovered her strength, these things weighed upon her. France was in move ment, and though at Paris the jealousy of factions caused a most unsettled state of things, yet the French armies, badly equipped, destitute of resources as they were, seemed successful everywhere.

After a brilliant campaign, the young General Buonaparte had triumphed over the Austrians and Piedmontese, and, by a series of masterly movements, had marched his troops to within a few miles of Turin, where king Victor Amadeus, forced to sue for peace, concluded a disgraceful armistice.

The strong places of Coni, Allesandria, and Tortoni, two standards, fifty-five guns and fifteen thousand prisoners were the results of this short but brilliant

Digitized by Google

campaign, in which the young Sergeant Jules gained his promotion. These were stirring times, and soon Moreau's victory over the Austrians at Radstadt was followed by the successes of Bassano and Rovedero, and ultimately by those of Rivoli and St. George, the consequences of which were the surrender of the Austrians under Wurmser, who had been reduced to extremity in Mantua, the capitulation of Provera, with six thousand men, and the settlement of the fate of Italy.

All the enemies of France, who had united against her in arms, were now forced to submit. There was but one exception to this state of things, and that exception was England, who had hitherto refused all peaceful advances, and maintained her asserted empire over the seas; but with this exception, an interval of comparative peace followed closely these brilliant victories—the treaty of Campo Formio being proclaimed.

Two years had passed marked by great events for the world at large, but slipping noiselessly by for the inhabitants of the quiet little Norman village where the actors in our tale dwelt.

It was winter. Isabel had been absent all the afternoon, and the short day was drawing to a close. It was her habit to receive and to take back the work which now formed the only occupation of the two sisters, and while Berthe, with her more dignified character, stayed at home, working in the little kitchen from early morning till late at night, Isabel

Digitized by Google

took a delight in the long rambles to St. Valery and Dieppe. Berthe's only distraction lay in her own thoughts, which were continually turned towards her lost position, and her absent father, while Isabel seemed to have forgotten both. Berthe's dress was never neglected, but was always homely, befitting the station she moved in; her sister's, on the contrary, always showed some little bit of lace or finery, procured she hardly knew how. Her fair face and childish manners, however, served her in her new vocation, and ensured her a welcome in the various houses where her business led her to receive new work, or take back and be paid for that which was finished. Light-hearted and gay, she accepted the life she led, and seemed to forget entirely that which she had lost; carelessly going on her way and amusing herself as best she could, while her more stately sister brooded over the past. As for Goodwin, he and Berthe saw little of each other, and as the prisoner's usual avocations lay in the open air, it was not necessary they should see much of each other, though living under the same roof. Such, then, appeared to be the relations the different parties held to each other in the little farm-house of Veules. It was winter, and the last rays of the setting sun were disappearing in the west, as Isabel took her way across the heights leading from St. Valery to Veules. She might have taken the high road, which was certainly pleasanter for a pedestrian, but perhaps she liked the sea-view, and if so it was a splendid one, over

Digitized by Google

which her eye ranged from time to time, as, with her basket on her arm Isabel d'Hervily took her way across the bleak downs that winter's evening.

The air was sharp and frosty, and perhaps it might account for the heightened colour of the girl's cheek. She was not alone, for the late captain of the Argus, who should have been looking after his nets, or his garden, or in fact anywhere but where he was, walked by her side.

"If I were a man," said Isabel, "I would not remain here as you do. Why don't you get yourself exchanged?"

"And leave you perhaps for ever. Is that what you mean?" asked Goodwin.

"Well, not exactly," replied the laughing girl; "but this war cannot last for ever. It is said France seeks peace, and I'm sure she has had enough war to satisfy good-tempered Jules himself, now he is an officer; and then, when the war is over, you would return to Veules in your ship, for of course you could get one, and then we could all three roam over the world together."

"A delightful picture, dear Isabel," answered the sailor, laughing, for he had caught the girl's gay humour, "and it would certainly be better than arriving as I did last time on a broken plank, and owing my life to one I don't like."

"And why don't you like Jules?" she asked; "he has always been very kind to us."

Digitized by Google

"Does he not love you, Isabel?" said the sailor, looking into the blue laughing eyes as he did so.

"Well, but what does that matter, provided I don't love him?" answered the light-hearted Isabel. "Is no one to be allowed to love me but you, Mr. Englishman?"

"Indeed, I would have it so," was the reply. "But, Isabel, you are right. I will speak of our plighted troth to your sister to-night, and I will take means to obtain my exchange as soon as possible. The time has passed so happily, dearest Isabel, since I first thought that I might succeed in winning what I have learned to prize more than my profession, that I have avoided thinking of the future."

"Not to-night, dear Richard, not to-night; Berthe has not a suspicion of the truth. Come to us to-morrow, and now, good night; we are not half a mile from home. Good night."

The sun had set, and the long wintry night had closed in as the two had been talking. A small solitary farm-house lay close to them surrounded by trees. Almost all the isolated farms of Normandy are thus protected from the cold winds, and the lights of the house could be distinguished through the leafless branches, as the wind moaned among them.

"Hush!" exclaimed Goodwin. "I thought I heard some one speak among the bushes yonder. Good night, Isabel; to-morrow I will come."

The two separated. Goodwin, remaining a few seconds watching the figure of her he loved as she

Digitized by Google

moved along, until at last he lost sight of her in the darkness; and then, turning to the right, in the direction of the high road to Dieppe, he took a more circuitous route towards Veules.

The lights of the little village lay before Isabel as she moved on, and she was near enough to notice the little twinkling, isolated gleam from the window of the farm-house, easily recognised because detached from the rest. Her path was straight, but between her and the village ran a break in the cliffs. Some convulsion of nature many years since must have split the rocks, forming them into an opening, down which a small stream now took its way. A path ran down the side of the ravine, and the same zigzag road, never taken but by foot passengers, led to the summit on the other side which looks down on the quiet little village of Veules. Isabel had often passed by this pathway, and it saved a long walk when coming from St. Valery; but the night was dark, and the late rain had detached masses of rock and clay.

She regretted she had parted from Goodwin, but it was now too late. Descending into the ravine, whose sides were clothed in places with stunted bushes, Isabel lost sight of the houses of Veules. She thought she heard a step behind her, and so sure did she feel of this, that the girl stopped.

"Is that you, Richard?" she asked.

A few rolling stones were heard bounding down the hill-side, and even that noise ceased as they splashed into the water below. Isabel became really

Digitized by Google

alarmed, her heart beat fast; and, never of a brave constitution, the sombre darkness and the silence awed her.

"Dear Richard!" she said again, "if that is you, answer me."

Still no reply; and, fancying she had been mistaken, Isabel moved hastily on; but in her confusion she had lost the path, and was stumbling among the loose stones and stunted brushwood. The tears fell from her eyes, as, frightened and dizzy, she struggled forward.

A loud cry burst from her when, with a whirring noise, a covey of partridges rose disturbed from among the brushwood, and her foot slipping, she rolled forward down the steep ravine into the deep darkness. Her little basket was lost, but, clinging to the bushes, she at length stayed her downward progress, though only for a moment, for she felt the bush tearing from the ground as she clutched it. A loud, despairing cry burst from her, and her eyes closed, as with a crashing sound, a dark form came bounding down the side of the ravine, and a strong hand seized the fainting girl. Ten minutes later the arms of the late sergeant, Jules—now a lieutenant of infantry—bore the insensible form of the poor girl into the little kitchen; where, shortly after, her eyes opened to see no one but her sister, to whose care and kindness she was only too glad to confide her fears and the tale of her accident; both of which were apparently soon forgotten, for the next day Isabel's

Digitized by Google

merry voice might be heard singing her favourite songs, all her gaiety returning with the dawning light. Goodwin was to be with them that morning, and the fate of her future life would be settled in the consultation which would follow; but the morning wore on, and the sailor did not come. Afternoon came, and gradually the waning light gave place to darkness, which in its turn yielded to the rays of the morrow's sun, and no Goodwin came. At length expectation gave place to alarm, and the songs ceased. Towards evening of the second day, Isabel crept softly up the ricketty stairs, she knocked at the closed door of the room where Goodwin had been carried after the shipwreck, and which he had continued to inhabit since. There was no reply. She listened, and all seemed silence. Again she knocked without success. Tremblingly Isabel lifted the latch, and entered the little room. A figure was standing near the latticed window, almost undistinguishable in the closing darkness. For a moment Isabel hesitated, the next the figure moved towards her; and the same hand that had saved her in the ravine the previous night clasped hers, the same strong arm that had borne her home when she had fallen fainting in the glen encircled her, as Jules Lacroix led her into the room.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUP D'ÉTAT.

THE English prisoner was seen no more on the beach of Veules, and the garden which his labour had rendered productive, gradually returned to its old condition. The weeds grew and flourished apace, and the seasons rolled on their course; while the lazy fishermen of that quiet place, concluding that the Englishman had forgotten his parole, soon forgot him, and his very memory seemed to pass away. A life more or less in those days mattered little, and though the two girls would have willingly made some inquiries as to Goodwin's fate, they hardly dared do so, for though her armies prospered abroad, France was in a terrible state of confusion at home, and the hopes of the Royalist cause having again revived in Brittany, the restless leaders of the Chouanerie were doing their best to foment these troubles. The consequences were fresh and severe edicts against the *emigrés*, and to such an extent had this been carried that a law had been passed making the families of all *emigrés* residing in France responsible for the consequences of the acts of the Chouans. The daughters of the Count d'Hervily were therefore obliged carefully to conceal their identity, and thus forced to

Digitized by Google

bend before the storm more and more, and were only too happy to remain in their obscurity.

In the Rue Chantereine—which was even then anything but a fashionable street in Paris—there were several groups of men gathered together. They were composed for the most part of military, and a good deal of excitement seemed to manifest itself among them. General Buonaparte had returned to Paris after his victories in Egypt, escaping the English fleet as though by a miracle. He had traversed France, and had been welcomed everywhere with enthusiasm. The seeds of ambition long since sown in his heart were springing up, and his celebrated proclamation had that morning appeared. "What have you done?" asked the young conqueror of the Directory. "What have you done with that France which I left you so brilliant? I left you peace, I find war. I left you victories, I find reverses." The question was proudly asked, for the young general had the army at his command. To a man the different corps then quartered in and about Paris, were his, and the knowledge of this had caused the Directory, under the control of Lucien Buonaparte, to leave Paris for St. Cloud. The versatile Parisians were alarmed, a strange kind of fear ran like electricity through the different quarters of the city, vague rumours circulated, and groups of soldiery, mixed with armed citizens, were to be met with everywhere.

In a small room of a little house in the Rue Chan-

Digitized by Google

tereine, sat the man who was about to endeavour to calm this feverish anxiety, and to create out of the chaotic principles of disorder and revolution, social happiness and national greatness and prosperity. It was a hard task, but the man was equal to the emergency. Every one is familiar with the features of the First Napoleon. It would be useless to describe the piercing eye, the olive complexion, the massive forehead, and the rather heavy lower jaw which characterized him. The figure which in after life became heavy, was at the period of our tale comparatively slight, and the compressed lip, and decided manner which were so strongly marked in after life, were visible then but in a minor degree. The room was small, and not very well furnished. Round the walls hung swords and arms of every kind, the chairs and tables not actually in use were littered with books and papers, while on a table in the centre of the room a large map of Europe was spread.

Three people occupied the room in the Rue Chantereine, on the 18th November, 1799. There was the old member of the Republican Convention, Cambaceres, a man who was growing grey with a life of intrigue and plotting; the second figure was that of Lebrun, afterwards third Consul; while the third figure, dressed in the costume of a republican general, with the heavy sash, and with his hair falling in straight lines over his forehead and temples, was that of Buonaparte.

The General was standing, his right hand resting

Digitized by Google

on the open map of Europe, while Cambaceres and Lebrun were seated, the first on his right, the second on his left hand.

"We are then agreed," continued Napoleon, who had evidently been speaking long and energetically. "First, the dissolution of the Directory, the French forces to be massed on the Rhine and the Alps, and if possible peace with England."

"If possible," muttered Cambaceres, "but how is this to be obtained."

"Peace is necessary for a time," replied Napoleon, "if it can be obtained at a reasonable price; to obtain it we must make concessions." Then walking to the door he raised his voice. "Send me the orderly officer of the day."

"Captain Jules Lacroix," continued Napoleon, as the good-humoured face of the ex-sergeant appeared at the open door; "you mentioned to me the name of an English naval officer, confined in the prisons of the Temple, under the accusation of a proposed violation of parole."

"I did, General, and being an old acquaintance, though an Englishman, I asked a favour on his behalf."

"And I," replied Napoleon, "am ever glad to grant any request made by one of my Guard. The Englishman shall be released on certain conditions."

Rapidly writing as he spoke, General Buonaparte handed the paper to the officer. "There," said he, as he did so, "is the order for his conditional release.

Digitized by Google

In an hour you will bring him here, when those conditions will be made known to you."

With a military salute the young officer turned on his heel, and left the room. "Our messenger is found, Cambaceres," said Napoleon, as he sat down at the table; "and now let us draw out the conditions which we must intrust to the care of the released prisoner."

"They must be such as may be acceptable to a haughty rival, and not be unbecoming of our great nation," returned Lebrun, as the trio settled themselves once more to the consideration of the momentous question which occupied their minds.

The course of our tale leads us to the prison of the Temple, where the numbers confined were such as to overtask the resources of even that large building, though used at that period only for the safe custody of political prisoners.

In a room situated in the same massive tower where the late king had lingered out his last hours of misery, in a low vaulted chamber into which the light struggled feebly enough through the November fog, sat a solitary prisoner.

The furniture of the room was scanty in the extreme, consisting of a chair, a table, and in one corner a paillasse bed, a large earthen pitcher stood on the table. The tenant of this dimly-lighted room was an Englishman; but in his thin sunken cheeks and languid eye, as he paced to and fro within the narrow limits of his cell, few would have recognised

Digitized by Google

one who, amid the war of the elements and the wrath of man, had braved both the fury of the hurricane and the guns of the enemy, never losing hope until not a splinter of the Argus remained beneath his feet. The young sailor could have borne anything except this close confinement, and that he was now forced to bear; but his pale thin cheek, his languid eye, and the attenuated form on which his clothes hung, in many places tattered and frayed, showed how badly he bore it. It was an unusual thing for a prisoner of war to be conveyed to Paris; but for some reason unknown to him, Jules Lacroix, whose gallant conduct at Rivoli and St. George had brought him under the special notice of his General, and gained him a command in the ranks of the Guard, which the future first Consul was even then forming, had received the order that such should be the case. The paroled prisoner of Veules had not, indeed, been mentioned by name; but Jules had overheard the conversation on the heights that winter's evening, when the sun set behind the mist of the western sea, and that night, when dreaming of liberty and Isabel, Goodwin had been aroused, and in obedience to the written order signed by the Directory, had been conveyed to Paris, and at once plunged into the prison of the Temple.

His rival's presence was utterly unknown to him, and thus it was when alarmed by her lover's prolonged absence, Isabel had found in his place the lieutenant of the Guard.

Digitized by Google

Days became weeks, and those weeks merged into months, and still the unhappy prisoner, of whom all trace had been lost, languished in the Temple. Instead of the deck of his dancing craft, the stone floor of the dungeon; in place of the roar of the elements, the dead silence of the prison cell; instead of the merry laugh and cheerful ringing voice of her he loved, the gruff tones and surly impertinence of the jailer, who hated him partly because he hated every one, but principally because he was an Englishman.

Pacing up and down the narrow cell restlessly, or sitting at the rude table, with his own thoughts only for companionship, Goodwin passed his days, his strong constitution gradually giving way under the terrible trial. Sometimes, more particularly during the first weeks of his confinement, he would work himself into a passion, and pass hours tracing out projects of terrible revenge to be taken on the French at some future day when he should be free; but that day came not. Weeks of wearisome captivity had subdued him, and despair had begun to work upon his mind. In this mood Goodwin was pacing up and down his prison, thinking of the green waves curling before the fresh breeze, and trying to cheat himself into the belief that he was pacing his own quarter-deck, when he heard a far-away step in the long gallery which led to his cell. It was not the hour for his jailer's visit, consequently, in that dead quiet even a distant footfall was an event. What could it

Digitized by Google

be? Some fresh prisoner, perhaps, for the step sounded heavy and slow, like that of his jailer. It could not be that, for there would be two footfalls if there were a fresh prisoner, and only one was distinguishable. The step came on, sounding louder and more deliberate. Goodwin paused in his walk, his heart beat fast, much faster than it would have done in the roar of battle or of the tempest. Suddenly the footfall stopped, and the red blood mounted to the prisoner's cheek as he heard the key inserted into its place and slowly turn back the wards of the strong lock.

No; it was not his ordinary jailer. It was a man dressed in black, his sallow face and straight-cut hair giving a sombre look to his whole person.

"Follow me," said the man, after a moment's pause and a quick glance round the cell.

"Whither?" asked Goodwin; "where are you going to take me? remember I am an Englishman, and a prisoner of war.

"Follow me," repeated the dark sallow man, turning on his heel and vouchsafing no other answer.

Goodwin had nothing for it but to obey, and he did so, passing along the stone paved and vaulted corridor leading from the tower into the main building. Their steps echoed in the vaulted passage, but not a living soul was to be seen. A heavy iron-barred door separated the long passage from the rest of the prison, but it swung on its hinges as the man in black, who was the assistant governor of the Temple, approached, and Goodwin recognised standing there his old jailer,

Digitized by Google

who, with a grave face, and without his usual malicious smile, bent his head as his superior passed. Down a stone staircase, across a grim courtyard, empty and desolate, the three took their way, not a word being exchanged until the door of the warder's room opened and they entered. It was a gay, cheerful room—at least it seemed so to Goodwin, for a ray of yellow sunlight was streaming through the grey fog and between the bars of the window. There was a weak, spiritless canary hung up at the window, and some seedy-looking geraniums on a table near it. A wood fire burned on the hearth, and a man dressed in the uniform of the Guard was standing with his back to them, warming his hands at the bright, cheerful blaze. It was almost too much for the prisoner. It seemed a glimpse of heaven to him after his long and fearful solitary confinement, where he had no one to commune with save himself and his own sorrow-stricken thoughts, no human face to cheer him save that of the revengeful and surly jailer, and even that only once a day. He was unnerved, and the unbidden tear started from his eyes and rolled down his thin cheek as the warder spoke.

"Here is the English prisoner, given up on the order of General Buonaparte; you will be so good as to give me a formal receipt for his body?"

Goodwin had barely time to dash the sign of weakness from his face as the man at the fire turned.

"What, Jules Lacroix?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Jules Lacroix, mon capitaine," returned the

Digitized by Google

other, "now captain in the Guard, and armed with his General's order for your provisionary release."

"Provisionary only; then I am not released?"

"Not exactly—but I trust you will be so; and now Citizen de Marolles, give me the order, and I will sign my acknowledgment on the back of it, and you, mon capitaine, make yourself as presentable as you can, for in ten minutes you must be before General Buonaparte, who will decide your fate."

Goodwin followed his former jailer into an adjoining room, but it was little toilet he had to make. Money he had none. The two men had met cordially enough. Goodwin had not an idea that Jules was his rival; still less did he suspect that the captain of the Guard had anything to do with his imprisonment, but the other knew well what had passed, and though the sailor's release was in part owing to his intervention, yet he was aware that the motive power from which that intervention sprang was not one to be confessed.

Ten minutes after, a carriage passed down the Rue Chantereine, and Captain Lacroix and his prisoner were announced as waiting General Buonaparte's pleasure. A delay, very acceptable to Goodwin, here occurred, giving him time to compose himself, for the quick transition from the dull, dead despair of the morning to the bright hope of the present was sudden and trying. Men wearing the uniforms of every arm of the service were passing around him. Names even then known to the world were freely

Digitized by Google

bandied about. Moreau, Lannes, Desaix had interviews with General Buonaparte. Murat, already the gay, foppish, but brave and dashing cavalry officer, had just passed them when the summons came, and a moment after Goodwin stood in the presence of the man who was to decide his fate.

Napoleon's face was stern, his mouth was fixed and rigid, and his questions few and sharply put.

"Your name is Goodwin; you are a captain in the navy?"

"No, General. I commanded the Argus privateer in the service of the British government, and the Argus consequently carried the King's pennant."

The momentary effect of the sudden change, and the glimpse of liberty had passed away partially, and Captain Goodwin stood before the French general, firm and decided, feeling once more that he was an Englishman and a sailor, despite rags and wretchedness, and one, too, falsely and wrongly dealt by.

"It is the same thing; you commanded the lugger on board which the Count d'Hervily embarked at St. Valery. It is useless to prevaricate."

Goodwin's pale cheek reddened, and he simply bowed assent.

"You therefore acted the part of a spy; and further, you landed on the French coast to incite Frenchmen to rebellion against the Republic. You merit death."

"Parbleu," interposed Murat, "would that we held them all as we hold this one,—the accursed islanders. The guillotine would be busy."

Digitized by Google

Goodwin drew himself up, and with a haughtiness for which a moment before he would hardly have given himself credit, replied, "I do not merit death, General. My ship was driven on your coast, having been partially disabled by the fire of one of your frigates. I had already been paroled, and I now demand at your hands that treatment my nation has ever accorded to yours under similar circumstances, my acts being covered by the glorious flag under which I sailed."

"Away with the braggart," muttered Murat, striking his hand on the table.

Napoleon glanced at the thin form and torn clothing of his prisoner, and then, turning to Lebrun and Cambaceres, held an earnest conversation.

"Prisoner," he resumed, "your acts have not been of that straightforward nature your countrymen boast of. Your punishment you have merited, and have undergone. The Directory needs a messenger who will faithfully and quickly deliver certain despatches to your government. Are you willing to undertake this—your personal liberty being your reward?"

"I am," replied Goodwin.

"Captain Lacroix," resumed Napoleon, "you will receive the despatches alluded to this evening. You will, without a moment's delay, forward them from the nearest port by the prisoner. You will not lose sight of him until he embarks, and you will facilitate his embarkation by every means in your power."

Digitized by Google

The next moment Goodwin was in the ante-chamber, half-stunned with the prospect of liberty and a return to England, the bustle of the world going on around him almost unheeded.

Messenger after messenger arrived from the Directory, and it soon became buzzed about that the General had been summoned to appear before it to swear fealty to the Republic. The clang of arms and accoutrements resounded around him; mingled with the buzz of voices in hot and eager discussion, and still the late prisoner sat in a corner of the ante-room, brooding over his own hopes and situation, and utterly unmindful that the fate of a nation at that moment was being swayed to and fro in the scales of chance. Should he regain a command on his return? should he be able to see Isabel before he embarked for England? these and a hundred other thoughts were filling his mind as he sat utterly lost to the events actually passing, until he felt a heavy hand laid on his shoulders.

"Come, mon capitaine," said Lacroix, for it was he, "we can't remain here idle while the world is in motion. Your promise, given to our General, I consider as your parole. Will you come with me or remain here? I am about to join my Grenadiers at St. Cloud."

"But my dress?" said Goodwin, in reply.

"Oh, that's easily managed. A Grenadier's cloak and cap will cover a multitude of sins, and of rags too; so come along, mon capitaine, and see what's

Digitized by Google

going on in this Paris of ours, before you return to the fogs and dulness of your England."

A few months since none would have caught the Frenchman's infectious gaiety sooner than Goodwin, but his long imprisonment seemed to have changed the reckless character of the light-hearted seaman. When the two arrived at St. Cloud, General Buonaparte had preceded them, and as the Grenadiers of the Guard, the leading company commanded by Captain Lacroix, marched up to the Palace, it was said that General Buonaparte had refused to swear fealty to the Directory.

The whole population of the place were up, and the excitement was great; but when the heavy tread of the Grenadiers was heard, the people cheered them, and as company after company of those men who had fought at Rivoli and St. George, in Italy, Germany, and Egypt, moved onwards, the sympathy of the people evidently lay not with the Directory, but with the army, and with its young General.

Unwillingly and unconsciously Goodwin was assisting at one of the great events of the day, as he marched along, his sailor's dress covered with the long grey cloak, and the undress cap of the French Grenadiers on his head. It was the 19th November, 1799, and the pale sun was just visible through the fog, as the Grenadiers—the cheering strains of their martial music ringing on the air, amid the vivats of the populace—drew up close to the Orangerie of St. Cloud.

Digitized by Google

The music ceased, the muskets were ordered, and the men stood at ease; suddenly a loud burst of shouts from the interior of the building was heard, stilling the noise without. Again and again rolling shouts—"Down with the tyrant, down with the Dictator," came borne to the ears of the soldiery. They needed no order from their officers. In an instant they comprehended the situation. Their General was within the Orangerie. He who had led them to victory was a prey to the members of that Directory which sat like a nightmare brooding over and oppressing France. The French soldiers had been left to starve by the Directory. Who had clothed them, who had fed them? the same man who had led them to victory in many a country, their loved and idolized Buonaparte. Not a command was given, and yet the clatter of steel was heard, as the bayonets were fixed, while at this moment, driven from the spot, and followed by the tumultuous hooting and shouts of the members of the Directory, General Buonaparte appeared. He was pale, and looked nervous. The eye that had never quailed before the enemy now seemed abashed as the opprobrious terms of tyrant and usurper were launched at him. He leaned on the arm of his brother Lucien, and, as he appeared on the threshold of the building, a storm of derisive yells rang around him from the throats of the triumphant members of the Directory. The battle had been fought and lost. Suddenly Napoleon's eyes rested on the bright

Digitized by Google

bayonets of his Grenadiers. Behind their heavy masses the crowd was swaying to and fro, ready to applaud or denounce either side. Buonaparte's foot paused as he was about to descend the steps leading from the Orangerie of St. Cloud. His eye brightened as his glance took in the serried mass of glittering steel.

At that moment his horse was brought. Turning to his men, companions of many a hard-fought campaign, his pale cheek flushed as he addressed them: "Soldiers of Italy and of Egypt," asked he, "can I depend on your bayonets now, at my great need?"

With a loud cheer, an officer sprang to the front. "To the death, General. Vive Napoleon!" shouted Lacroix, for it was he. The shout was electrical; and as the Grenadier captain's sword waved in the sickly November sun, one long, loud shout ran through the assembled troops. The people took up the cry, and the loud shout of "Vive Napoleon!" rang on the November air. Dashing to the front, Murat waved his bright sword, "Forward, Grenadiers," he shouted, "In the name of our General, we dissolve the Directory—Forward!" The band of the Grenadiers struck up, and, amid the rattle of the drums and the clank of arms, the leading company, led by Lacroix, entered the place. One long cry of "Vive la Republique!" rang through the hall, hardly subsiding when the deep voice of the officer was heard as the words, "Grenadiers, prepare to charge!" answered

Digitized by Google

it; while through the doors, through the windows, by dozens poured the baffled and discomfited members of the Directory. The French Republic was at an end, and General Buonaparte was proclaimed First Consul, his power backed and supported by the bayonets of the whole French army.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

ISABEL.

AMIDST all the bustle of the surrounding world, the little village of Veules seemed to enjoy a lazy kind of tranquillity, at least as far as political events went. The rough winter wind came sweeping over the sea, and whistling up the narrow street, and down the ravine in which the village was situated. Sometimes it overturned the boats drawn up on the beach, or tore the thatch from the roofs of the houses, and the waves tumbled in upon the shore, piling up stones and broken shells here and there; while, at others, the breeze just sighed over the calm sea which fell lazily in miniature wavelets on the sand. The seasons rolled their course, and those different seasons of the year generally bring with them strong indications of their advent among the inhabitants of a small sea-side village like that of Veules in Normandy. During winter, when the fierce gales incidental to that coast sweep the sea, it is a lazy time for the fishermen. They stay at home, making nets or patching up their boats; occasionally going to sea for a day, just for want of something to do, and living on dry salt fish. Spring

Digitized by Google

calls them into life again, and then the younger and more active start for the larger ports, such as Havre, Dieppe, and St. Valery, to man the boats for the deep sea fishery. Their friends, relatives and sweethearts generally accompany them to their port of departure; and, as one of these larger fishing-boats usually has a crew of at least sixteen men and boys, the number of their followers is often large. When the boats sweep out to sea, the men and women follow along the pier, singing hymns, and reciting prayers for their relatives' or friends' safe return; and even when the craft is heading to seaward, they may still be seen on the pier, watching the white sail of the boat containing those they love, or kneeling at the foot of the cross praying for their safe return. The cobles on the beach are busy, too, in the spring; but when summer comes, and the shoals of herrings and other fish approach the coast, the poor fellows work night and day. The whole village is redolent of fish. The curing and smoking houses are in full work. Tubs full of herrings are before every house, barrels of them are being rolled about. The women are covered with herrings' scales. They adhere to the men's whiskers, they fall out of their beards, and glisten like silver on their bare brown arms, and on their red Phrygian caps. The whole place is perfumed with herrings, fresh and smoked; but autumn comes, and labour is scarce in a land where conscription thins the population; and now the fishing-village is empty, for young and old, male and female, are

Digitized by Google

away with their sickles among the ears of golden corn. This is their real harvest, for labour is scarce, and high wages are given, and so they journey from farm to farm, earning enough to enable them to idle through the winter, until the warm sun of spring again brings the sea-fish to their shores. Half fishermen half farmers, they plod through life, caring little for the world around them, needing little, and ever happy and contented.

Such was the life led by the simple peasantry of Veules at the period when our tale is laid; now, perhaps, if the reader happens to find him or herself at the fashionable seaside resort of France—Dieppe—and feels sufficient interest in the personages of this narrative to venture a pilgrimage to Veules, a good hotel may be found, and the beach, which was so quiet in days of old, may, for aught the writer knows, resound to the laugh and the voices of bathers; there may be a casino, and, in place of the thatched roofs and low white-washed cottages, the seaside residence of the enriched banker or that of the fashionable actress may have risen. Be that as it may, one of the last spots on the coasts of Normandy to feel the innovating hand of modern fashion will ever be the simple, quiet, retired village of Veules.

The little kitchen of the farm-house, still tenanted by the two sisters, looked more comfortable than it did when the reader first entered it. It was a dark, dreary November morning, it is true; but a bright

Digitized by Google

wood-fire sparkled on the hearth, and various newly-acquired riches in the shape of articles of crockery, and pots and pans, scrubbed to the brightness of silver, ornamented the chimney-piece or peeped from a large cupboard, whose doors were left perhaps purposely open. It was a singular transformation, and yet it was evident that the change had taken place, and that the dark-eyed, stately Berthe, who had once almost scorned to show a gleam of pleasure or of pride, as, blazing with jewels, Mademoiselle d'Hervily formed one of the circle of brilliants set in the entourage of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, now took a pride in the bright show of common every-day utensils which were displayed around her. The secret of this was, that misfortune had been her teacher, and had bent her proud spirit. The old name, bright in the annals of French history, had descended to her. The position in society, the gleaming jewels, even her beauty, were not her own; but what she saw around her had been won by her own toil, and by the work of her own hands; and, as old recollections faded from her, the present, with its hard matter-of-fact details, had become her life.

The fire gleamed brightly on the hearth, a table was drawn near it, and the two sisters sat at their work. On the table lay a letter, that morning received, and a letter was a rare luxury in the little farm-house of Veules, so that it was no wonder that its contents supplied the topic of conversation, as the

Digitized by Google

busy fingers plied the needles which had added all the bright pots and pans, and all the clean-looking crockery to the formerly bare household.

"Well," said Isabel, after a long silence, "I suppose there is no help for it. A captain of the Guard is not a person to be treated lightly in these days, and Jules will be here to-day. He writes from St. Valery. I wonder what he is doing at St. Valery," continued Isabel, taking up the letter.

She was not very fond of work, and it is to be doubted whether the display of crockery would ever have been made if poor Isabel's fingers alone had been employed. Her tongue, however, was nimble enough.

"And, yet, how can I forget poor Goodwin? I wonder what became of him? Why do you never speak of him, Berthe?"

Her sister looked up quickly.

"Did you not say that, when Jules met you in the empty room, he had told you that Goodwin had broken his parole, and escaped? If he did so, he was no longer worthy of our esteem, and that is why I do not speak of him."

Berthe's face flushed as she spoke, and she too dropped the work on her knees, and gazed contemplatively into the sparkling, crackling blaze, as she continued:

"And yet, Isabel, I have often regretted I did not tell him our secret. Who knows, though he never spoke to us of his past life, he might have helped us

Digitized by Google

he might have aided in removing the veil which hangs over our father's fate. Our poor father! he may be languishing in some prison, or in some far-away land. Isabel, I can't help thinking we have acted wrong."

"Well, it's no use talking about it now," was the reply. "It's settled I'm to marry Jules, and that he will soon be a marshal of France; and it's settled you are to live with us; and, as Jules is in the Guard, we shall go to Paris, and so, bon jour la compagnie—for I must look my best, now Jules is to be here to-day," and so, tossing the work on the table, the light-hearted girl disappeared behind the heavy screen which separated the room, and her clear ringing voice could be heard from behind it, as she rang out the verses of the then popular song, "Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre."

She had not half finished, and Berthe was still gazing into the bright, cheerful blaze, her thoughts reverting to Goodwin and to her father, of whose fate she was uncertain, when the clink of a sabre on the stone steps, and a sharp rap at the door, told of the letter-writer's arrival. Isabel's song ceased, and Berthe looked up from the firelight as she gathered up her work, and with it brushed away the tears which had almost unconsciously welled into her dark eyes. It was evident the new comer was impatient, for as no one bade him enter, the latch was lifted sharply, and the next moment Captain Lacroix stood inside.

Digitized by Google

"Good morning, mademoiselle. Where's Isabel?" was his first inquiry.

"Here, mon capitaine!" sang the merry voice from behind the curtain. "Are you in a hurry, for if so, the best thing you can do is to go away?"

Jules laughed; and turning to Berthe, "May I come in?" he asked.

"It seems to me rather late in the day to ask the question," replied Berthe, with a spice of her sister's lively humour, "but of course you may. We were waiting you."

The grenadier Captain unbuckled his sabre, and placed it carefully against the wall. His cap was hung on the handle of the sword, and his gloves thrust into the handle itself; and then passing his hand through his hair, he moved towards the fire. He was a soldierly-looking fellow, and though not handsome, there was a degree of intelligence in his quick grey eye, and of honesty and good-temper in his large, well-furnished mouth and broad forehead, which rather belied each other.

He had completely lost the rather countrified manner which had marked the sergeant of the republican army; and though he had not perhaps gained in honesty of purpose, in outward appearance Captain Lacroix, of Napoleon's Grenadiers of the Guard, was a very different man from what the sergeant commanding the solitary post at Veules had ever been.

But the quick grey eye, ever active and observant, belied the open, good-tempered mouth; and this

Digitized by Google

particular morning the forehead was contracted, as though with thought.

"And what brought you from Paris to St. Valery, Jules?" asked Berthe, continuing her work.

"The order of the First Consul in the first place, and the bright eyes of your sister in the second," returned the young grenadier.

"The order of the First Consul!—and pray who may the First Consul be?" asked Berthe, in utter surprise.

And then the tale had to be told, for news travelled slowly in those days, of how the Directory had outlawed the young and victorious General, and how the bayonets of the grenadiers had proved too much for the eloquence of the members, and how Napoleon was First Consul, and how his ideas were all for peace; so much so, that Jules had been sent to St. Valery in order to see despatches leave for the British Government. Captain Jules, with his open brow and his good-tempered smile, took good care not to say who had been the bearer of those despatches; and his tale was interrupted from time to time, as snatches of song came trilling from behind the curtain, the clear silvery tones confirming him in his resolve to forget the remainder of his tale.

He had just finished, when the curtain moved aside, and Isabel appeared looking really very pretty, as the blaze of the firelight danced over her fair hair, and reflected itself in her deep blue eyes. She looked pale and delicate, but that very delicacy was

Digitized by Google

set off by the dark dress which, against her usual custom, and from some caprice, she then wore. Rising from his seat near the fire, Jules took her hand, and gallantly kissing it, he led her to the chair; taking a rough stool, which he disinterred from a corner known to him, and gazed into Isabel's face in a manner which brought the red blood to her cheeks.

"There, that will do, Jules;" said the girl, as she placed her hand over her lover's eyes—he exercising a lover's privilege by immediately appropriating it.

"How beautiful you look, Isabel!"

"Do I? You did not seem to think of me when you were chattering away about your First Consul, just now?"

Berthe remained absorbed in thought, and at length she rose, busying herself about the place to prepare the table for the meal of the day. Her actions, as she went through these ordinary occupations of life, were full of quiet gracefulness; but Jules had no eyes for her, and Isabel only saw her lover, and admired the handsome uniform and the newly-acquired ease of the young officer. They were a handsome couple as they sat together by the fire: the blaze of the crackling wood reflected from the burnished epaulettes and bright appointments of the French soldier, and sparkling in the blue eyes of the fair girl. Their conversation was low and eager, and Berthe made a more than usual clatter with her

Digitized by Google

plates and dishes as she moved from the cupboard to the table.

At length all seemed in order, and the table ready for the single plate which made their simple dinner, and which was as yet simmering and bubbling in the earthern jar by the fire.

"Have you heard anything of your former charge, the Englishman Goodwin," abruptly asked Berthe from the table, as she moved a plate to its proper place.

Jules started suddenly and violently, and the start seemed communicated to Isabel, who was the first to answer.

"What on earth made you think of him, just now?" she said, a little angrily.

"No, I have not heard directly of him," answered the soldier; "but I believe him to be safe in England."

"Then he has broken his parole, and is not worthy of our thoughts," replied Berthe, with a deep sigh. "I thought better of him, far better; but we must forget him."

The grenadier's quick grey eye sparkled, and the smile spread itself over the good-tempered mouth, as Berthe spoke. His own answer had been apparently truthful, for to the best of his belief Goodwin was at that moment in England; and if people chose to associate with his name the imputation which Berthe had coupled with it, why it was not his fault. And now the pot-au-feu was on the table, and the First

Digitized by Google

Consul's grenadier gave visible proof that if he were in love, his appetite was undiminished: and the evening wore on, and the feeble November sun went down in fog and mist in the western sky, and as it did so, Isabel d'Hervily had promised to love Captain Jules Lacroix; and Isabel did love him with as much love as her gay, light heart was capable of. Goodwin was forgotten, or, if remembered at all, was thought of only as a defaulter, and one who had needlessly deserted them, breaking a solemn pledge by so doing.

And the candles were lighted, and new wood heaped on the fire, for the old battered lamp had been burnished up and put by in peace on the chimney-piece, and there was plenty of wood stored in the shed behind the house. Jules was rather extravagant with it too, and would only bring a little at a time, and the consequence was that he had to make the journey between the fireplace and the shed very frequently; and though it was but a few paces, Jules was a long time going and returning, for it was very dark that November night, and Isabel was obliged to come to the door with a candle to light the way, and somehow the candle often went out, and the last time this occurred the soldier returned without the billet of wood he had gone to find; but he returned with what was more to the purpose, for Isabel had promised him to be his bride, and as he must rejoin his regiment, had consented to forego all scruples, and they were to be married

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

within a week. All further explanations were deferred till the morrow, there were no settlements to make, and there the three sat before the cheerful blaze, talking of old times and of their future life, all thought of past trials forgotten by Isabel; while a sense of pain, mingled with pleasure, at her sister's settlement in life, oppressed Berthe's heart as she thought of the humble roof which had so long been her shelter, where she had waited and longed for the coming of the father who never came, and where the only friends she had known in her misfortune, had also mingled in her young life.

The fate of the father was unknown, that of the English prisoner was uncertain, and all that was left to her of real life was centred in those on whom the firelight shed its feeble rays in the little kitchen of the farm-house of Veules.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

A NORMAN WEDDING.

MANY a curious tradition, and many singular habits and usages have been retained in the remote villages of Normandy and Brittany. To the inhabitants of a little village like that of Veules a marriage represented one of the great fêtes of the year, and did not occur very often, and as this particular one was to take place at the close of the month of November, just at the beginning of what was to them the idle season of the year, it was looked forward to with no little interest. The curé of a small Norman village is a man of great notoriety. He is not only the clergyman, not only the medium of all the great ceremonies of life, from the christening to the first communion, from the marriage to the funeral, but he knows every one and every one's secrets. The church and the churchyard are not for the simple peasant, what the same places are with us. In matter-of-fact England, a relative once dead, is, if not forgotten, at least left to the silence of the grave. In Normandy the churchyard is seldom deserted, and the grave, surrounded by flowers or shrubs, with the wreaths of immortelles, hung here and there, is generally tended by hands

Digitized by Google

that aided, when living, the occupant of the silent tomb. Once a year a day is devoted to the dead, and that day towns and villages pour out their population into the cemeteries, and all day long the crowds flow in and out, to hold silent communion with the memory of the dead.

It was the last day of November, and the marriage of Captain Jules Lacroix and Isabel d'Hervily was to take place the next day. Jules had gone through a long conversation with Berthe, during which she had detailed to him all the circumstances of their position, and parentage, but Jules cut short her communications, telling her he was perfectly aware of it.

The marriage was fixed for the morrow, and according to the custom of the village, Captain Jules Lacroix was to feast the villagers for three days. In the large towns of France the Revolution had swept away most traces, not only of these ancient customs, but even of the marriage ceremony itself. It was no longer regarded as a religious, but as a civil rite, and it was only in the remote villages that any attention to these usages remained. The kitchen of the farm-house had been invaded by a band of young girls, and among them stood a tall young fisherman. Jean Latouche was the genius of the place, and, like many others of his stamp, he was a very lazy one.

He never went out fishing when he could avoid it. Harvest time was a penance to him, and, were it not that Jean stood six feet high, had a tremendous appetite, and loved wine better than work, he would

Digitized by Google

have been content to lie down in the sunlight and pass his life in a lazy, hermit kind of fashion. He was great however on all festive occasions, for he could play the violin and the flute. He was a poet too, and could make impromptu verses. They were not very good ones, but then the peasantry of Veules were not over critical. So there stood the tall, lanky Jean Latouche in the kitchen of the farm, going through the preparation necessary at the hands of the village maidens, to qualify him for the task of "Inviter."

They were a merry set, those light-hearted girls, as they twined the parti-coloured ribbons round a light conical felt cap, until not a spot could be found capable of holding another. The ends of the many-coloured ribbons floated in the air, and Jean was pushed here and there among them, until at last he came plump down on the floor in a sitting position, and the bevy of girls, forming a circle, danced around him. By the fire stood Berthe and Jules, both laughing; while, holding the gaily ornamented hat in her hand, Isabel stood ready to go through the ceremony of dressing the official "Inviter."

The dance ceased, and still the lanky Jean sat on the stone floor, making all kinds of grimaces, and it was only after Isabel had placed on his head the ornamented cap that he was allowed to rise; and then a pole, also liberally bound round with many-coloured ribbons, was placed in his hand, while Captain Jules, a black bottle of Burgundy in one hand, and a large

Digitized by Google

tumbler in the other, advanced through the throng to administer sundry potations to the nowise unwilling official; and then, filing from the doorway, the girls singing, the children shouting, and Jean Latouche whirling his gaily-decked pole round his head, after the fashion of a drum-major, the procession with the official Inviter ever at its head, took its way to the curé's house. Woe to the unlucky urchin who came within arm's length of Jean Latouche's staff of office. The ruthless pole invariably descended with dire effect, and the howling of the lad who felt it added to the uproar of the scene. Up the main street of the village the procession takes its way without stopping, and the people all run to their doors to see it pass. Some offer cups of cider, but a wave of Jean's pole keeps them at a distance. The songs of the girls, the screams of the unlucky lads whom the pole reaches, and the laughter of the people fill the street. Jean's foot pauses as he nears the little village cabaret, round whose door some dozen of the fishermen are congregated, looking picturesque enough in their red Guernsey jackets and Phrygian caps, but Jean knows his duty, and the charms of the village cabaret are left behind. Soon the little church, with its tin-capped spire, surmounted by the time-honoured Gallic cock, comes in view, and the white walls of the curé's cottage, with its long straggling vine carefully nailed up against the front, are seen. The singing now grows louder, and Jean's step becomes more majestic, as the gay procession passes

Digitized by Google

onwards, just skirting the little cemetery where the quiet grave-stones lie. But the laughter of the girls, the shrill screams of the lads, and the loud ringing, "Ah, vous dirai je maman," floats away among the grey head-stones and broken columns, as with a loud thump of his pole Jean Latouche halts before the door of the white cottage. And now comes the great trial for the nerves of the "Official Inviter," for it is here his genius is taxed. The girls gather round him, but Jean's six feet of lanky stature far out-tops the tallest; and the wind waves the ribbons on his conical hat and pole, as the door opens and a rather stout benevolent-looking man stands on the threshold. His head is uncovered, and his grey hairs are few and far between, but they and his black soutane and his shaven crown tell that the curé of Veules is before them. The laughing girls are silent, and drop each their best curtsey; but Jean Latouche feels the effect of the two tumblers of heady Burgundy, and he knows besides that the ribbons are waving round his hat, constituting him the great man of the day. Waving the official pole with a majestic air, Jean begins his recitation. His rhymes are mere village rhymes, containing an invite to the morrow's feast, but they are long and tedious, and Jean is too proud of them to spare the good curé a single strophe. Like everything else they eventually come to an end, and then the good man courteously accepts the invite, and gives with his own hand a small tumbler of wine to the village orator.

Digitized by Google

He calls in one of the girls, taking her into his little study, and the gay party outside wait for her, until at length she reappears with a bouquet of flowers sent by the clergyman to the bride. The old man stands on the door-step watching the cavalcade as they take their way to the village. And so the day wears on, the procession moving from house to house, leaving an invitation to each and all to assist at the morrow's ceremony, and at the marriage feast. Night comes, but the lights in the village cabaret burn brightly, and the place is well filled. Jean Latouche is there singing gay songs, and the hat with its parti-coloured ribbons is placed on a table, the long stick beside it. One of Jean's privileges, in return for his music and his rhythm, is that of drinking as much wine as he likes at the bridegroom's expense, and he was not a man to spare the wine-bottle. The merry sounds of the flute are soon heard, and the impromptu dance on the well-sanded floor is kept up till a late hour.

A solitary light gleamed from the little diamond-paned window of the farm-house, where the two sisters passed the night. The dancers had tired themselves out, the strains of the flute had long since ceased, and the light of the candles began to pale before that of the dim December dawn, and still the two sisters sat in deep discussion over that important step which one of them was to take so soon, and which was to change the future life of both. The morning slowly dawned, the long December night passed away, Berthe having more than once declined

Digitized by Google

the mission entrusted to her of telling Captain Jules Lacroix that Isabel had changed her mind, and would not, nor had ever meant to be married; and with the early dawn came the troop of village girls again. They brought flowers and green wreaths, and soon the door was locked on the outer world, and the business of the day began. It seemed a long affair, for it was past twelve when the bride, leaning on her sister's arm, moved up the little street, and took her way, followed by her maidens, to the curé's house.

The day was fine and calm, the sharpness of the air alone telling of approaching winter. Isabel looked rather pale, and her large blue eyes showed that tears had not been strangers to them during the past night, and Berthe seemed anxious and rather nervous. Events had hurried them on. It was no ordinary period, and the universal ruin which had overtaken the nobility of France seemed final and irrevocable. Berthe had struggled long against it, but the hand of poverty and destitution had pressed heavily on both. From the poor people of the village she had received the kindness and shelter denied elsewhere to the orphan girls. Jules Lacroix had been their friend from the first, and had more than once stepped in between them and starvation in the first hard days of trial, and he had ever done so in a quiet, gentle manner, which had endeared him to both. And so the two sisters, dressed in white, and followed by the merry troop of laughing girls, moved up the village street. Every cottage gave some one

Digitized by Google

to swell the troop, each and all dressed in their best, and though some of their hoarded finery was rather rusty and antique, there was a smile and a kind pressure from hands more accustomed to the use of the oar and the net than to the gloves, which made those hands feel very awkward.

The house of the village curé was situated on a little eminence close to the church. The door was wide open, and at it stood the burly form of the curé's housekeeper, a stout, hearty-looking woman of fifty.

The little parlour was soon crowded, though there were barely a dozen inside, and then the baskets of flowers were produced, and the good-humoured looking old lady proceeded to dispose of them. The white orange wreath worn by the bride remained untouched, but there was plenty of demand for the flowers, and the ceremony was hardly finished when the sound of the flute was heard, evidently coming towards the house; heralding the approach of the bridegroom with all the male population of the village, Jean Latouche at their head. The bridegroom looked gallant enough in the full uniform of the Grenadiers of the Guard, as he alone of the whole entered the little parlour to claim his bride from the hand of the old curé. There was something touching in this. Hurled from the high position they had occupied among the nobility of France, Isabel d'Hervily, without a relative in the world, found a father's office fulfilled by the curé of her church, and soon a loud cheer was

Digitized by Google

heard as the bride and bridegroom appeared at the door, the crowd opening and closing up again as they passed towards the little church.

Their way led through the churchyard, winding in and out among the quiet grave-stones, the December sun sparkling on the tin-capped spire of the church, and lighting up the grey stones. As they entered the church door the choir struck up an anthem, and the crowd poured into the church, filling every corner and nook.

And so Isabel d'Hervily plighted her faith at the village altar, without a thought for him who had received her vows on the high cliffs looking over the Western sea, and the marriage party took its way again down the village street to the farm-house, where high feasting was held after a fashion. It is true there were no expensive dishes, no costly wines. The homely pot-au-feu formed the "pièce de resistance," and cakes made of flour and rice, sweetened with sugar, were esteemed great delacicies. Cider there was in plenty, and good Bordeaux wine, and gaiety and laughter rang around. The old curé was present, and his presence was a guarantee that everything was conducted decorously; and though Jean Latouche, on whom two days' free run of the village wine cellars had not been without its effect, broke out once or twice, on the whole there was nothing to complain of.

The ball was held in the large room attached to the inn, specially built for those purposes, and

Digitized by Google

stately Norman dances were danced all night long. Jean Latouche was there, sometimes playing the violin, sometimes emptying a black bottle, but oftener leading the dance, with his high-crowned hat, round which the parti-coloured ribbons indicating his office fluttered as he moved along. In the rooms adjoining, the old people sat playing cards or telling tales, but the open doors looked out on the ball-room, and the good old curé was there, moving here and there, and mingling with the mirth and revelry, and so the night wore on, the bright lights gleaming from the windows and tinging the waves as they broke on the beach, and the sound of the music floating away to seaward on the breeze. And the moon rose and traced a long path of silver across the sea, but no one heeded it; and the flute and violin continued untired, while the boys of the village passed a sleepless night, clamouring and scrambling for the dried fruits and bon-bons which were showered from the open windows.

The village fête lasted three days, but the next morning the lumbering diligence pulled up at a spot where a lane branches off from the Dieppe road, and there stood three people awaiting its coming. It soon rumbled on its way, and the road became once more solitary. The diligence was bound for Paris, and though the music was heard again that night floating away to seaward, and the lights flashed and twinkled from the windows over the beach, though Jean Latouche yet shook his gay hat until the ribbons

Digitized by Google

fluttered merrily in the ball-room, the little latticed windows of the farm-house showed no light, and its door was closely shut, for Berthe had accompanied her sister. And so the lumbering old diligence rolled away towards Paris, the clank of the horses' feet sounding sharply in the frosty December air, the jingle of the horses' bells mingling with the cheering shout and the crack of the conductor's whip, while the breath from their nostrils flew away in clouds like steam as they toiled merrily forward on the route de Paris.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

JULES LACROIX.

Our tale must here pause for a moment, and instead of following the onward course of events, must return to the little village of St. Valery-en-Caux, at the moment when, after two days' hard travelling, Captain Lacroix and his prisoner Goodwin reached that port. The immediate object was that one of the fishing luggers of the place should be procured either to convey Goodwin over to England or to put him on board some English man-of-war. This was not so easy, for as the mission was not a lucrative one, and some risk had to be run, the fishermen of St. Valery did not volunteer readily. Lacroix, however, presented himself before the mayor, and in the name of the First Consul, made a requisition for the transport required.

Goodwin had seen the delay with pleasure, for he had hoped to profit by it and find time to say farewell to Isabel, but the mayor of the place, a consequential dignitary, who owned several of the deep sea fishing vessels himself, and had no wish that one of his own should be appropriated to Goodwin's use, soon extinguished these hopes. Winding his official scarf round his waist, he hurried away, assuring Lacroix

Digitized by Google

that in half an hour the lugger should be off the port. Half an hour then was all the time Goodwin had to spend on French soil. He strolled on the jetty, looked over the sea, marking where the Argus had cast anchor on her perilous mission, thought of the results of that mission, and how it had entailed nothing but death and destruction to those concerned in it. His thoughts reverted to the gallant French noble who had embarked from the spot where he now stood, and whose bones were now whitening beneath the sea, or perhaps jammed in among the rocks at the foot of the precipitous cliffs. Absorbed in reverie, he took his way back towards the little town-hall to rejoin Lacroix, who was waiting the mayor's return to sign the necessary documents. He could not help pausing before the house under the shelter of whose roof he had had his first interview with the French noble and the Chouan chief. An old grey-headed man was standing on the steps of the entrance. Guided by the impulse of the moment Goodwin spoke to him.

"Yours seems an old fashioned looking house, mon père," he said. "Is it of old date?"

"Old, ma foi," replied the man; "why, monsieur can see that, by the queer gables and the woodwork let into the walls. Look at those beams, those were not fashioned in these days. Why, Henri IV. lodged in this house on his way to Dieppe, before the battle of Arques. Would monsieur like to see the room?"

"Yes, monsieur would like to see it," and the

Digitized by Google

garrulous old man showed it accordingly. It was a large tumble-down looking room, the flooring eaten away with age; and a few stiff-backed chairs and an enormous oak bedstead, with mouldy tapestried hangings, formed nearly all its furniture.

Goodwin let the old man run on for some time, and then remembering that his stay was short, asked leave to see one other room in the house.

The old man was surprised, and scanned the stranger with a curious glance. "Monsieur is an Englishman, perhaps a prisoner on parole?" he asked.

"Just so, and my time is short, as I sail for England in a quarter of an hour, by order of the First Consul, as bearer of important despatches."

"Will monsieur describe the room he wishes to see."

Goodwin did so, and the old man's ruddy face grew white, and his hands trembled as he answered, "I have no such a room in my house."

Unaccustomed to long debate, the sailor turned on his heel, going down the stairs towards the door, but instead of going out, he deliberately placed his back to the entrance, took his way along the passage, stopped at a small door, opened it, and walked in. He stood in the very room where he had first met the Count. There was no fire now, but there were burned-up ashes in the empty, black-looking fire-place. The chairs, the tables were all there, but a thick coating of dust lay upon them, and the window

Digitized by Google

was nearly darkened with dirt and filth. He heard the door sharply closed behind him, and turning quickly, found the old man by his side.

"Will monsieur be good enough to explain how he knows my house so well?" he asked, in a nervous fidgety manner.

"You are the proprietor then?"

"I am, and my father was before me, and his father before him. We are poor, monsieur, but my name is an ancient one."

"Well," returned Goodwin, "I can't see that an ancient name profits its possessor much. I know this room because I met in it a French nobleman. His own death, with that of many others, the loss of my ship, and my own imprisonment was the result of that meeting in this room. You must know I mean the Count d'Hervily."

"And you say he is dead," replied the old man. "Dead! and we all thought him a prisoner in England. Alas! his poor daughters, they are now orphans and destitute."

"His daughters—can you tell me, old man, where they now are?"

The old farmer hesitated; but Goodwin was not a man to be refused. Drawing a chair, and motioning to his host to sit down, he briefly told him his tale. How he had anchored off the coast, met Count d'Hervily in that very room, safely conveying him to England. He sketched briefly the results of the Quiberon expedition, and the Count's death. Told

Digitized by Google

of the papers he had received, of the wreck of the lugger off Veules.

"Mais, mon Dieu!" exclaimed the listener, "then you met them. Mademoiselle Berthe, Mademoiselle Isabel, they are yet there."

The truth now flashed at once across the seaman's mind. What with the roar of the hurricane, the roll of the vessel, and the creaking of the ship's timbers around him, the Count's dying words had come faintly to him. He had hardly heard them, but now the recollection of them flashed vividly upon him.

Jumping suddenly up, he sprang out of the door, barely hearing the old man's exclamations as he did so, and hurried down the street towards the mairie.

The half-hour had long since expired, and Lacroix was angry, and chafing against the delay. The lugger was lying off the port, rising and falling on the long waves, and a boat was waiting at the jetty. The wind, too, was fair, and Lacroix was, as we know, anxious for reasons of his own to see the last of the English prisoner. His patience was all but worn out, and he had begun to fear that Goodwin, unable to resist the temptation, had broken his word and started for Veules.

It was but four or five miles distant, and he reasoned on the basis of what he would have done himself. In this he was mistaken, for Goodwin having once promised was sure to keep his word. Just as he had resolved to go in search of the missing

Digitized by Google

seaman, the door opened with a sharp jerk, and Goodwin entered the room.

"I must have a few words with you alone, and that at once," said the new comer, impatiently.

The mayor gathered together his papers. "You can remain here, monsieur, if you wish; I have business in the next room, and when monsieur is ready his ship waits him; only I would remark," he continued, turning towards them as he reached the door, "if monsieur delays long it will be low tide, and the lugger must lie far off the beach."

Goodwin bowed, waited until the door closed, and then turning to Lacroix:

"Captain Jules Lacroix," he said, "I have business of importance to transact before I leave. I ask for a few hours' delay, and then I am ready to embark."

"Impossible. My orders are to see you on board ship at once."

"Listen, Jules. I have made a discovery since I left you, I have found out by the merest hazard a secret, which is of the greatest importance, not to myself but to those we both are interested in."

"You mean to our friends at Veules, but it is useless. My orders are to see you on board with as little delay as possible. Every minute that now passes is an infringement of those orders. You little know General Buonaparte, if you think that your own private affairs weigh one feather in the balance against a public mission."

Digitized by Google

"Then if you will not give me the poor favour I ask I will take it," replied Goodwin, moving towards the door.

"Stay, monsieur," said Lacroix, drawing himself up. "It will be painful for me to act otherwise towards you than with the courtesy I could wish. You know enough of a soldier's duties, to be aware that if I fail in mine, I risk the punishment of degradation and death. You will, therefore, not think me harsh when I tell you that if you cross that threshold, it will be with an escort of the gendarmerie, who will have orders to place you by force on board the lugger. Now choose for yourself."

Jules' hand was on the bell, when the door opened, and the mayor again appeared to tell them that the captain of the lugger was impatient, and the tide falling.

"Your choice, mon capitaine," said Lacroix, motioning to the official to remain.

Goodwin pondered deeply. Virtually he had no choice left. It was but to go of his own free will, or be bundled on board a prisoner.

It was not that he debated. Should he trust Lacroix with the secret and with the documents delivered to him by the dying man, or should he retain them in the hope of his own return? Duty prompted the first course, for he knew Lacroix to be a firm friend to the two sisters, and anything but a republican at heart. He had met him first as a simple non-commissioned officer, in a little village of Normandy,

Digitized by Google

but he had always fancied Jules was other than he appeared. Still inclination prompted him to retain the secret and the papers which, to a certain extent, gave him power over the fortunes of the two orphan girls. The struggle was short. Raising his head he walked up to the captain of Napoleon's Grenadiers.

"Captain Lacroix, if you will give me a few minutes' private conversation," he said, "I will at once embark."

Jules made a motion with his hand, and the obsequious official retired. Goodwin knew he had little time to spare, and he rapidly ran over the same history he had detailed to the old man, his companion listening to him attentively. He dwelt more at large on the details of the death of the Count d'Hervily, and lamented bitterly his own stupidity; he then placed the papers which he carried on his person in the hands of his companion; "And now, Jules Lacroix," he continued, "I am ready to embark. I might have retained those papers. Had I faith in the peaceful mission I am called upon to execute I would have done so, but I have no such confidence. Promise me, on the faith of a soldier, that those papers and the tale I have confided to you shall both reach their destination."

Jules' quick grey eye glittered as his hands closed upon the parchment, which he thrust into his bosom, and the frank, good-tempered mouth smiled as he wrung the sailor's hand. "I promise, on the faith of

Digitized by Google

a soldier, mon capitaine," he said, "and it is a promise never broken."

Goodwin turned away with a sigh.

"And I am ready to embark at once," he said.

A quarter of an hour later the sails of the lugger were filled, and she was standing away with a fresh breeze over her quarter, heading dead for the English coast. Jules Lacroix kept his promise, adhering to it literally. With a firm faith in the well-known proverb of his countrymen, that all is fair in love or war, he secured his bride first; but on his arrival in Paris gave up the papers, which were not of any great value, and told the tale of the wreck of the Argus to the two sisters. Meanwhile, events progressed in Europe with fearful rapidity. England refused the peaceful overtures of the First Consul, but found herself all but deserted by her allies, even Russia taking part with France. On the seas she was indeed triumphant, but on land her sole ally, Austria, was terribly maltreated. Leaving Paris, Napoleon suddenly crossed the Alps, and the battle of Marengo was fought, the First Consul gaining so decided a victory over the Austrians as to restore to France all she had lost in Italy; but the army lost one of its bravest leaders, for Desaix fell, heading a charge of the Grenadiers of the Guard.

It was a critical moment when their general, lying dead on the ground, and the heavy tramp of a division, composed of the élite of the Austrian infantry, was heard moving forward to crush the weakened

Digitized by Google

files of the Guard. The men wavered, when, springing forward from the ranks, an officer called upon them to revenge their leader's death. With a loud shout, the Grenadiers moved on, in one dense, compact mass, burying themselves in the very centre of the Austrian square. Their doom appeared sealed, but Kellerman, with his heavy cavalry, came sweeping on, charging down on the Austrian rear. They broke and fled, the bayonets of the Grenadiers doing fearful execution on the disordered masses, while the bright sabres of Kellerman's dragoons did the rest, and the field of Marengo was won. Captain Jules Lacroix, whose headlong courage had stayed the wavering ranks of the Guard, received his promotion on the battle-field of Marengo.

While the First Consul triumphed in Italy, Moreau, after a series of brilliant manœuvres, fought the battles of Hochstedt and Neuberg, and then, near the defiles of the Tyrol, utterly routed the Austrians at Hohenlinden, capturing eleven thousand prisoners, and over one hundred pieces of cannon. The road to Vienna lay open, and without a moment's pause the conquering army moved forward. All was doubt, apprehension, and dismay in the Austrian capital, and, utterly humiliated, the Emperor was forced to bow before the storm, to renounce the English alliance, and sue for peace; and thus England, triumphant on her own element—the ocean—and victorious over the French under General Menou in Egypt, found herself isolated and alone. Pitt, the

Digitized by Google

leader of the war party in England, resigned his office as Prime Minister, fresh overtures were made by the First Consul, and the pacification of Europe, by the so-called treaty of Amiens, followed close on these brilliant successes, which crowned the era of the Consulate.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

THE HUNT.

THE peace of Amiens had been signed in the month of March, 1802; and, though many minor differences remained to be settled, returning confidence was gradually creeping through the different states of Europe. Late one evening, in the month of April, following on the declaration of peace, the various forest-guards might have been noticed gathered together in a court-yard of the buildings which had formerly formed part of the royal kennels of Fontainebleau.

Even in those early days of his budding greatness, the First Consul loved the stately oaks and the picturesque grandeur of Fontainebleau; and the assembly of forest-guards, each of whom was in the act of giving in his report as to the number and the age of the deer harboured in that particular canton of the forest, told that the future Emperor of France was about to revive one of the old customs of the land long fallen into disuse, and that a hunt in the forest of Fontainebleau was once more to take place.

Surrounded by such men as Augereau, Bernadotte,

Digitized by Google

Lannes, Soult, Ney, and others of the same stamp, Napoleon, while following out the active life he loved in the first days of his dawning power, doubtless matured many of the plans he eventually carried out under the old oaks and beeches, while following the wild-boar and the deer of the forest. It must not for a moment be supposed that the First Consul's life at this eventful period was one of repose. On the contrary, he courted peace but the better to prepare for the long and terrible wars which eventually led to his last act of power, carried out under the roof of that very palace of Fontainebleau, which, however, at the period of our tale, was used as a means to separate the First Consul's authority from that of the ever-jealous, ever-struggling Directory, sitting in Paris. The peace of Amiens found France in a state of transition. That peace was absolutely necessary to consolidate the power brought into life by the successes and brilliant victories achieved by the army. And, while laying the foundation of his military renown, the future Emperor laboured at the creation of that system which has been less appreciated in England perhaps than by any other nation of Europe.

His mornings spent with men like Gaudin, Monge, and Berthollet, in the difficult task of reorganizing, out of the chaotic confusion of revolution, the elements of financial prosperity and of establishing the principles of criminal and civil law which gradually merged themselves into a code now more or less

Digitized by Google

acknowledged throughout Europe—the "Code Napoleon;" his afternoons were devoted to the active pursuits of hunting in the old forest; Napoleon's life was, perhaps, at this period more useful to the world at large than it ever subsequently became. The usual plots and conspiracies against social order were eternally going on at Paris. Narrowly escaping with his life from the attempted assassination of the Rue St. Nicaise, the First Consul began his struggle against the Directory by a series of arbitrary acts, calling from that yet powerful body strong denunciations of coming vengeance, unheeded for the moment, amid the quiet of progress and comparative peace. After all, it was but comparative this short period of rest, and it was looked upon, in England particularly, more as a cessation of actual warfare than in the light of a permanent peace. The thunder-storm of war still floated in the political atmosphere, while the restless military genius of the First Consul had organized an expedition for the subjugation of St. Domingo, and a force consisting of twenty-one thousand men, under the command of General Leclerc and Rochambeau, had sailed, with instructions for the subjugation of the island. With them was associated Colonel Jules Lacroix, and soon the roar of the guns was heard on the far-away shores, where the gallant Toussaint l'Ouverture struggled vainly against a power sure eventually to crush him.

But all these were minor considerations in the estimation of the newly-appointed officers of the

Digitized by Google

future imperial hunt; nor would it have weighed much with them either had they known that His Britannic Majesty's brig Seagull had anchored off the coast of Brittany, and that her commander, Richard Goodwin, had left Paris for Fontainebleau, there to meet and settle certain vexed points with the worthy citizen Guilleaume Otto, relative to the exchange of prisoners between the two nations, and the return of certain *emigré* nobles who were wishful to profit by the peace. The little knot of forest-guards broke up, the morrow's meet being fixed. After due consideration, a gallant stag-royal was selected, and the "Croix de Toulouse" named as the rendezvous for the first hunt which was to inaugurate a new era in the annals of French venerie.

St. Hubert himself could not have desired a more propitious morning. A light mist hung over the tops of the forest trees, whose branches were heavy with the young buds, just ready to burst into life under the first rays of a spring sun; and the long slender twigs of the birch-trees were waving in the morning breeze, as an old grey-haired man, followed by a powerful hound, took his way past the Croix de Toulouse, disappearing among the dense underwood, in the direction of Bois le Roi. A slight shower had passed over the forest, wetting the light soil; and, as the old guard and his sluth-hound moved cautiously forward, the rabbits and squirrels ran, startled from their morning meal; and the plaintive cry of the

Digitized by Google

woodpecker, as he dashed away before the footstep of the intruder into the forest solitudes, filled the air with the sharp alarm note. Bending low, and stooping cautiously, the old guard examined carefully from time to time the footprints, which his experienced eye easily detected, and which the stag had made when entering the dense cover which the night before he had selected for his feeding ground. The grey morning broke clearly, and more and more light began to pour in through the trees; the mist gradually rose from the tree-tops; and the first beams of the rising sun struck slanting upon them, tinging the bursting buds with light. The old guard started, and stopped suddenly, as his ear caught the sound of a branch breaking far away in front. Motioning to his hound, he pointed out to the sagacious animal the slot, or track of the stag, and then, instead of following it, struck off sharply to his right, the hound following him, but slowly, and with his black muzzle to the ground. Gradually the old guard bent his steps to his left hand, moving cautiously through the forest. Sometimes he passed through the open, sometimes moved for a few hundred paces up the forest drives, but, ever keeping to his left hand, he eventually, and after describing a circle of several miles, came back again to the spot whence he had started, and where he had pointed out the deer's track to his hound. The sun's rays now poured in among the stems of the old oaks and beeches; and the guard, taking off his cap, wiped the perspi-

Digitized by Google

ration from his brow; while the hound continued questing up and down the track the deer had made when entering the cover. Once or twice while completing the circle, the hound had struck a scent, but on careful examination it turned out each time to be the slot of some younger and smaller stag; consequently the guard was now certain that the stag-royal intended for the day's sport was quietly feeding within the bounds of the circle he had drawn around it, and so, their work done, man and hound took their way back to the Croix de Toulouse, to wait the coming of the pack. Seating himself on the stone-work at the foot of the cross, the old man dived into his capacious pockets, and soon the long lines of smoke from his short pipe curled round him; while the hound, lying quietly at his feet, forgot the deer, and everything else, in a sound sleep.

He was soon roused, though, for now down the steep road leading from the Croix d'Augas, half-a-dozen men, each in charge of about double the number of hounds, coupled together, came streaming along, making the before solitary forest road look gay enough; and each as he arrived was sent by the old guard away into some far-off corner of the forest, there to wait the chances of the hunt. Soon led horses and men came slowly down the road, and as the day passed away the large space round the old cross, which had been so solitary, became alive with men and horses; and still the interest of the scene went on increasing, for the

Digitized by Google

whole pack, with the piqueurs and their led horses arrived. It was the first hunt which had taken place in the forest for many years, and those years had marked an era of blood, revolution, and battle; but peace had now dawned, and this return to old habits and customs was hailed by the people around as a promise of its continuance.

The people streamed into the carrefour from every quarter. Fontainebleau sent its full quota of staid sober people, to whom all revolution and all progress was an abomination. Melun was well represented by a throng of busy active people, to whom the day was to be one of laughter, gaiety, and amusement—the morrow to take care of itself; and the neighbouring villages poured forth their population to swell the numbers; while the led horses and grooms lounging about, made the place look gay and animated enough. The pack, restless and fidgety, were snarling and quarrelling in one corner, for, hastily got together, and consisting principally of young hounds, their discipline was far from perfect. Suddenly the far-away tramp of horses, followed by the sounds of voices and loud laughter, rang among the trees, and a large party of men, dressed in uniform, rode at a sharp trot into the carrefour. The strong desire of those who had never yet seen the young and successful General whose name had already won European renown, now caused some confusion. Men and horses became mingled together, and the braying of the hounds, the neighing,

Digitized by Google

plunging, and kicking of the excited animals, mingled with the shouts of the men as they cheered the coming of the First Consul.

Murat was the first to appease the confusion, as, with the help of Berthier and Soult, who were soon joined by a dozen or two of the officers of the Guard, partly by good-humoured appeals, and partly by the terror excited in the minds of the people by the plunging and curveting of his horse, which was an Arabian, a ring was at length formed. Amused and gratified by the reception he had met with, Napoleon was soon in the saddle; all who had horses followed his example, and the pack leading the way, the hunt moved off, under the guidance of the old keeper, to the spot where the stag had been harboured over night.

Laughing and talking, as though there were no higher pursuit to be followed throughout a lifetime, the mounted men rode out of the carrefour, the pedestrians who had crowded it taking their ways, some to the cover side, where the stag had been harboured, others to the various quarters of the forest, where they thought it probable the hunt would pass. It was a brilliant group which then surrounded the First Consul; and had any one who witnessed that hunt, taking place for the first time for many years in the forest, been able to look forward into futurity, and gain a knowledge of the brilliant destiny of many there present, it would have been a scene of great interest, as the mounted group

Digitized by Google

took its way among the oaks and beeches towards Bois de Roi.

At Napoleon's right-hand, rode his favourite Lannes, subsequently destined to die a soldier's death in his very arms. Davoust, Oudinot, and Lamarque, Bernadotte and Massena, were present. But it was not only the genius of war which found favour in the eyes of the French General—that of talent was brilliantly represented too. There, in deep conversation with Goodwin, rode Portalis and Tronchet, who were even then compiling that celebrated code of civil law which, under the title of the "Code Napoleon," sprang from their fertile brains. There, too, rode the famous Talleyrand, and the well-remembered Gaudin, Duke of Gaeta; and, making rather an awkward show among the more practised horsemen, was Cuvier, whose restless steed evidently did not appreciate his rider's talents. A few carriages alone remained in the carrefour, whose occupants, principally ladies, preferred waiting until certain of the direction the stag should take, to the more uncertain mode of following the hunt.

Arrived at the cover side, where the noble stag-royal was known to have been feeding that morning, a few hounds were thrown in, and a breathless silence succeeded among the mounted men, who, no longer in one group, were scattered here and there, or were moving cautiously up the grassy drives to some spot where they fancied the deer might break cover. Suddenly the voice of an old hound is heard deep in

Digitized by Google

the cover, and instantly, with a cheering shout, the whole pack, liberated from restraint, dashed into the thick forest. Soon the cheerful notes of the cor de chasse come floating on the breeze; bridle-reins are tightened, and riders' knees grasp the saddle more firmly. A loud shout of "Tayo" tells that the stag has broken cover and been viewed, and the whole hunt streams away at a gallant pace for the Croix d'Augas. Headed by a group of spectators, the noble stag-royal pauses, and, though closely followed by the hounds, cheered on by Murat, whose bay Arab is already white with foam, comes at a gentle canter down the road leading to the Carrefour de Toulouse, the spot where the rendezvous took place, and, passing close to the carriages, dashes into the thick forest of the Ecouettes, the whole hunt sweeping beneath the noble birch-trees—even then rotting and falling from old age, while the clear, ringing sounds of the cor de chasse, and the merry laughter of the men, came floating on the air among the silvery stems, until again the cry of "Tayo" tells that the stag has been seen crossing the Melun road and heading for the Bellecroix. The "lancé" had been superb, and worthy of the opening hunt of the new régime, though the stag, conscious of his powers, had not as yet put forth his speed.

But it is different now, and Murat's horse, despite his Arab blood, falls to the rear, for the hunt winds up the steep hill-side, and the pace tells heavily as the horses gallop on, fetlock deep in sand. Cuvier

Digitized by Google

has turned his horse's head along the Melun road, and, immersed in thought, has taken his way soberly and quietly towards Melun, under the impression that he is on the high road back to Fontainebleau.

Portalis and Tronchet have given up all idea of obtaining information as to English civil law from Goodwin, who, better used to the deck of a ship than the saddle, has more than once narrowly missed a sudden death among the gigantic trunks and branches through whose intricacies the forest path wound. The sharp notes of the cor de chasse sound distant now; and, as they come borne on the breeze, they tell that stag and hounds have settled down to the pace, and are going at tremendous speed; but the steep hill-side is gained, the deep sandy plateau is passed, and a fair gallop and an equal chance is before all. A jagged stump has stopped Lannes' career, and horse and man are rolling on the ground, as Murat, his bay Arab, nearly blown, but still doing his best, whirls past with a loud ringing laugh. Away through the forest sweeps the scattered hunt, the loud horns ringing cheerily far in front; away under the old beech and oak trees, and past the silvery birches—the fresh spring breeze bringing the cheering music and the ringing shout down with it among the waving corn, and the long, bending forest grass. No time now to ask after the laggard or the fallen.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH OF THE STAG.

AWAY through the Cabinet de Monseigneur stretches the gallant stag, and soon the bursts of music ringing from the Table du Roi tell that the hunt is sweeping towards Melun. To Cuvier's surprise and astonishment, the stag dashes past him, closely followed by the pack in full cry, rousing him from his long reverie, and thus temporarily placing him the first man of the day. But it is a place he will not keep long; for the stag has broken out of the forest boundary, and has gallantly taken across the open country.

The First Consul has not been seen for some time, a single piqueur is up to hounds, and the forest is filled with the long tail of stragglers. Murat is quietly sitting dismounted under a tree miles away, his horse beaten to a stand-still. Lannes has headed for the château, bruised and shaken; while Bernadotte has had the humanity to check his heavy Norman horse to keep Davoust company, whose clumsy steed, putting his fore-foot when at full speed into a rabbit-hole, has given his rider a tremendous fall. What would have become of the hunt that

Digitized by Google

day had the stag kept on its course is very problematical; for Oudinot, Lamarque, Massena—nay, even the First Consul himself—each of them perfectly qualified to lead a charge against the heaviest Austrian square, in spite of musketry or artillery, would have turned away dismayed before the deep cuttings and ditches which then traversed the open country towards Melun. But this did not take place. A peasant's team, with the shouts of the ploughmen, sufficed to turn the stag, and, with a long sweep, the noble animal headed back for the forest shades. Charging the high, rotten palisades, the stag crashed through them, scattering the moss-covered wood right and left, and leaving a wide breach for the hounds; but here he was met by one of the relays, and the fresh hounds were soon on his scent.

Still untired, but finding his speed useless, the stag seeks shelter among a large herd of other deer, who, dispersing right and left, dash away in twos and threes, the hounds being thus misled, and thrown off the true scent.

A check ensued, which permitted many, who without it would never have rejoined the hunt, to come up; but soon the quivering sound of the cor de chasse on the left tells that the right scent has been struck, and once more the music of the pack is heard, as they dash madly onwards. Through the deep sand, down the steep hills clothed with the waving trees, the riders stream on, while the notes of the

Digitized by Google

ringing horns call them forward. The pace has told, however, and the heavier horses and men have lost the day. Severe falls have occurred, and even the piqueurs, well mounted as they ever must be, have not escaped; and the flattened cor de chasse no longer able to give out its cheery notes, together with the dust-begrimed dress, tell their own tale. The check experienced when picking out the true stag from the rest, has given the chase a quarter of an hour's lead, and the pace is, in consequence, much more severe. A bend to the right, and the magnificent oaks of the Grand Fouteau wave over the riders' heads, and soon the deep gorges of Apremont try still more with their heavy sand the tired horses.

Away through the tangled forest towards Reclose; but now the stag is in full view, the pack running mute. His late velvet hide is streaked with foam, and begrimed with sweat and dirt; his eyes are full and large, swollen with terror and exertion; his tongue, dry and hard, hangs far out of his mouth, while the light, springy trot is exchanged for a long loping canter. Not fifty paces behind him come the hounds, in much the same condition, but cheered onwards by the voices of the piqueurs and the ringing of the horns.

A deep rocky gorge lies below, and then a sandy plain. Only five of the whole of those who had assembled so gallantly in the Carrefour de Toulouse that morning are with the hounds now; but among

Digitized by Google

them rides the First Consul, and a little behind him, favoured by his light weight, gallops Goodwin. Through the gorge they sweep, losing sight of the stag, and emerge on the sandy plain to see the hounds running here and there wildly, all utterly at fault, and evidently not knowing what to make of the sudden check.

The afternoon sun was pouring a flood of light down the rugged gorge, lighting up the dark holes and caverns in the rocks, and tinging with its glowing rays the huge castle-like boulders of stone tossed one upon the other on the plain beyond. The curious formation of the masses of rock piled here and there on the sandy deserts to be met with in the forest of Fontainebleau, has been a sore puzzle to the geologist; but on this occasion they seemed to prove more puzzling to the hounds and piqueurs. Cast after cast was tried, the cheering voices of the men, and the ring of the cor de chasse, seemed useless as far as the hounds were concerned, for they were evidently wholly at fault; but the long check enabled many a tired horseman and fagged horse to come up, and one or two of the light carriages whose owners had been wandering about in the forest drives, attracted by the long wailing cadence of the horns, now appeared. Upon the plain, but close to the entrance of the gorge, lay a mass of enormous boulders of rock heaped one on another, and towards these a piqueur took his way, followed by half a dozen of the older hounds, while the remainder ran

Digitized by Google

questing about quite at fault, or wandered distractedly among the carriages and horsemen; many of the ladies, alighting from their carriages, threaded their way among the rocks, or chatted gaily with the horsemen, who kept dropping in by twos and threes. Suddenly a loud warning cry was heard from the mass of rocks already mentioned, and the loud shout of "Tayo" from the piqueur, was followed by the appearance of the stag itself, as with one bound it sprang into the very centre of the group, closely followed by the pack. A scene of wild confusion followed. Men mounted in haste—ladies ran shrieking to their carriages—while the stag seemed to pause for a moment in the midst of his foes. It was a noble sight, as with his antlered head high, his skin flecked with foam, and soiled with dirt, his large eyes seeming full to bursting, and his limbs trembling with exertion, the stag-royal stood utterly unmindful of the hounds around him. One second he paused thus, the next he lowered his antlered head, and dashed full at the First Consul. Gathering up his reins, Napoleon had barely time to let his horse feel the spur, ere the enraged stag was upon him. Away went the affrighted horse over rock and stone, the dreaded antlers almost touching his flanks, a cry of horror and dismay rising even above the loud yellings of the eager pack. Slightly glancing over his left shoulder, his spur just touching the horse's flank from time to time, the First Consul kept just ahead of the infuriated, but fast failing, stag. One

Digitized by Google

or two last efforts to reach the gallant horse, and to bury his antlers in his flanks, were seen and frustrated, when suddenly wheeling round, the whole pack at his heels, the stag plunged into the brushwood, leaving horse and rider unscathed. But all was not over, for, as suddenly emerging, the desperate stag dashed into the centre of the spectators, scattering them right and left, all giving place except one mounted gendarme, whose horse, not sufficiently quick, was rolled over, sadly gored, its rider receiving a heavy fall. And now the stag seemed to have made its last effort. His stiffening limbs refused to carry him further, and he must die. His hind quarters placed against a massive rock, his long sharp antlers lowered, he yet faces his clamorous foes, and keeps them at a distance. Two of the most daring hounds lie torn and bleeding on the ground, when, with a desperate effort, the stag royal once more charges right into the midst of his enemies. A loud shriek followed the charge, plainly heard even amidst the furious baying of the pack, and Goodwin saw one of the ladies whom he had before noticed, strolling among the rocks, not two paces from the deer, and right before it. The tall, commanding figure—the dark flashing eyes—seemed familiar to him, and he knew instantly that he and Mademoiselle d'Hervily had met again. All had drawn on one side, the stag was again just lowering his antlers for his last charge, when, with a touch of the spur, Goodwin's horse sprang forward, striking him full

Digitized by Google

on the flank. The dying stag fell heavily, but the horse, unable to stay its course, fell also, and horse, stag and rider rolled, one confused mass, together on the plain. It was the work of a moment for Goodwin to clear his feet from the stirrups, and the next he had seized in his nervous grasp the stag's antlers, while the hounds rushed in upon their prey. Even in death the tremendous power of the stag showed itself, as he tossed the strong man to and fro like a child; now whirling him through the air—now dashing him heavily on the ground—while the baying and yelling of the hounds, and the cries of the spectators, added to the excitement of the scene. Berthe d'Hervily seemed for a moment petrified with surprise and terror, for she never moved, while scream after scream rang on the air.

Suddenly the stag scrambled upon his knees—Goodwin, though apparently stunned, yet holding on to the long antlers; but it was a last effort, and as the noble brute sank heavily on its side, the long bright knife of a piqueur penetrated his heart: a few convulsive struggles, and the day's hunt was over, while the brass cors de chasse rang forth the death-notes on the clear spring air.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SISTER'S VOW.

"FORTY-EIGHT hours' notice to quit France, and to report myself to the Minister of War as I pass through Paris on my way to Havre. Rather short and peremptory on the part of your government."

"And what may it mean, Goodwin; are the rumours of war between your country and mine, then, true?"

The two speakers were seated on the steps leading to the "Good Ladie's" chapel, in the forest of Fontainebleau. Nearly a month had passed since the events related in our last chapter had taken place, and the glorious June sun of the year 1804 was pouring in among the green leaves of the trees, and shining brightly on the white walls of the little chapel. Many a loving couple had sat upon those steps, and had laid their simple offering of wild flowers on the altar inside, and many more have done the same, and will continue to do so, as they pray for the intercession of the "Good Ladie" in their favour; but the two now seated on the little step were not lovers, and though the sun was shining brightly, though the birds were singing around them,

Digitized by Google

and the soft balmy breath of early summer was sighing through the forest trees, yet Richard Goodwin's heart felt sad as he sat, with Berthe d'Hervily by his side, under the forest trees.

His left arm was still in a sling, and the altered hue of his usually ruddy face showed he had suffered from his desperate encounter with the stag-royal on the day of the hunt. But other things beside sickness had aided to pale his cheek. He had learned how his hopes of again meeting Isabel d'Hervily were at an end. He had learned how Jules Lacroix, now holding high rank in the service of his country, had used the very means put in his power by Goodwin, to his own ends. He knew, too, of the unscrupulous Frenchman's success; and that though now absent on his mission for the subjugation of St. Domingo, whither his wife had accompanied him, that he had, despite what Goodwin looked upon as unpardonable meanness towards himself, merited well of his country. It was bitter to him, too, to think that after all it was to Jules Lacroix he owed his liberty, and that without him he might have lingered on in the prisons of the Temple until released by death. The English sailor's frank nature could hardly realize the versatile Frenchman's belief, that all stratagems were fair in love, and thus foiled by the very weapons he had placed in his adversary's hands, he made up his mind that the day should come when he and Jules Lacroix should have a full settlement of outstanding grievances together. How-

Digitized by Google

over, pending this settlement, there he sat under the shade of the green forest trees, looking into the dark eyes of his lost Isabel's sister, and talking of his future plans. It was dangerous.

"Are the rumours of war true, then, Goodwin?" Berthe again asked.

"I can only tell you," was the reply, "that all Englishmen are ordered to quit France instantly, and that I myself am directed to do the same; but in my case a little more latitude is given, as I am once more to be the bearer of letters from the French Government, and as I am to receive them from the Minister of War, I presume they will contain a declaration annulling the late peace."

"Well," returned Berthe, "it could hardly be otherwise; your countrymen have seized upon Malta, and hold the Cape of Good Hope against treaties."

"And your First Consul, who, by the way, it is said, will soon be emperor, has he not organized camps at Bayonne, St. Malo, and Boulogne, to say nothing of Bruges, and of the army of Italy? but, Berthe, never mind our respective countries, let us talk of ourselves. In an hour I must leave. My brig, the Seagull, is off the port of Havre, only waiting me to leave the coast. Shall we ever meet again? May I look upon you ever as a dear sister?"

Berthe d'Hervily's large black eyes were bent on the earth, a slight flush showed itself in the clear

Digitized by Google

olive tint of her cheeks. She seemed to ponder over his words, and the rustle of the leaves, and the clear ringing note of the woodpecker came upon her ear as she did so.

"Come, Goodwin," she said, as she rose from his side, "come, let us follow the tradition of the country. Let us place our bouquet of wild flowers before the Good Ladie's altar, and I will promise a sister's affection at the same time."

Berthe sighed as she spoke.

"Agreed," replied Goodwin, "and there let it be until I come once more to talk over old times and my lost Isabel's love, dear Berthe."

Forty-eight hours after, Richard Goodwin stood on the pier at Havre, close to the old stone tower of Francis the First. The town resembled somewhat in its busy turmoil a large ant-hill just when the first warm days of spring call its industrious little inhabitants to life and labour. Carts and tumbrils were moving along its streets, the full band of an infantry regiment came upon the ear, playing the quick-step, as a regiment of the line moved out of the sea forts en route for Boulogne. The heavy rattle of the light artillery made itself heard above the din, and away to seaward the white sails of several small luggers, were to be seen gleaming in the sunshine, as they took their way through the water, heavily laden, for the same destination. Two or three larger craft lay at anchor just off the jetty, and boatload after boatload of men were passing between them and the

Digitized by Google

shore. The sun shone brightly, the breeze curled the waves, and tipped them with light foam, while all around the bustle and activity of a large town, suddenly wakened from a dream of peace to the stern reality of war, told its own tale.

A beautiful brig lay hove to off the mouth of the harbour. Her long black hull rising and falling on the waves, her taunt spars raking well aft, and the white hammocks in the nettings gleaming in the sunshine as she rolled; a heavier wave than usual showing her white decks, and the frowning battery of guns. The French tricolor floated at her foretop-gallant-mast head, while the long whip-like pennant at her main, and the St. George ensign streaming from her gaff, told of her nationality. A neat, well ordered gig was waiting, close to the old tower, and Goodwin could not help giving one look of conscious pride on his beautiful craft as he shook hands with the aiguilletted officer by his side, and descended the steps leading to the water.

Looking up as he stepped into the boat, and seating himself in the stern sheets, he saw the French staff officer's face bent down looking at him. "Give way, my lads, with a will," were his first words, and then turning in the direction of the jetty he waved his hand. "Au revoir, mon commandant," he said, addressing the Frenchman.

"Yes," was the reply that came wafted over the waves, as each stroke of the oars widened the dis-

Digitized by Google

tance; "Yes, au revoir, but in England, and within a few days," shouted the Frenchman.

"A prisoner of war, then," rejoined Goodwin, laughing. "Starboard a little, steady, so," and the boat shot on, just grazing the sides of a large flat-bottomed craft, filled with infantry, who bestowed many a muttered curse on the Englishmen, as they pulled for the Seagull's gangway, and Goodwin's last farewell of French soil was rapidly taken, while the French tricolor was hauled down, the fore-topsail filled, and soon sail after sail set, until the black hull seemed to support one tapering pyramid of canvas, as the Seagull's course was laid for Plymouth.

The treaty of Amiens became a dead letter, and the two nations were once more at war. Events followed fast and thick. Napoleon became Emperor. The iron crown of Lombardy was seized by him. Murat, Ney, Davoust, Lannes, and Bernadotte were at the head of his armies. Austria, England, and Russia coalesced against him, but in vain. At Hasloch, at Vertingen, at Echlingen, the military genius of France triumphed.

The Austrian general, Mack, shut up in Ulm, capitulated. Thirty thousand men became prisoners of war, and the capital of Austria—Vienna itself—lay at the mercy of the victorious army. The battle of Austerlitz was fought, fifteen thousand Austrians and Russians were killed, more than twenty thousand prisoners were taken; while the beaten and dispirited

Digitized by Google

Austrian Emperor sued for peace in person in the tent of the French leader. The coalition was broken, and England seemed at the mercy of her powerful foe. The French sea-board swarmed with troops ready at a moment's notice to be thrown on the English coast — the busy scene of which Goodwin had been a spectator on the jetty at Havre was but a feeble picture of what was going on elsewhere along the coast line of Normandy and Brittany. An army of two hundred thousand men was said to be waiting sea transport; a fleet of twelve hundred vessels was awaiting the Emperor's command to transport those soldiers across the Channel; but with the prestige of all her victories before her, France was never able to gain command of the sea.

Sir Robert Calder's action with the Franco-Spanish fleet, was quickly followed by the brilliant victory of Trafalgar; the results of which were so disastrous to the French navy, that the maritime resources of that country were never able to recover from the blow inflicted on them.

The life of a sailor in those stirring times was indeed a busy one, and to one of the active temper of the young commander of the Seagull doubly so. Under the orders of Admiral Cornwallis, and employed in the weary duty of watching an enemy's port, Goodwin passed his life. Years wore on, and with the exception of a month passed now and then in port when a refit became a matter of necessity, the

Digitized by Google

Seagull was always in active service. The rank of commander had been bestowed on the brig's commanding officer in recompense for a very dashing affair off Ambleteuse.

It took place on the 23rd of April, 1805, when a division of the invasion flotilla, consisting of thirty-three gun vessels and nineteen transports, sailed from Dunkirk roads.

The Seagull had been ordered to England, and was actually proceeding there, when the enemy's flotilla was sighted. That very morning Captain Goodwin had spoken the 38-gun frigate Leda, Captain Robert Honyman, with several other vessels under his command. Neglecting his instructions, which directed him to make the best of his way to Plymouth, Goodwin kept the enemy's flotilla well in view, and actually succeeded in disabling one of the smaller craft, but in doing so was struck by four heavy shots between wind and water, and found himself engaged with eight large armed schuyts. Luckily for Goodwin, he was able to keep the Seagull out of range of the land batteries, and uninjured in her rigging, until the Leda, with the sloops Harpy and Rattler, the Fury, and eight gun-brigs, comprising the squadron under the command of Captain Robert Honyman, came up.

The Seagull was terribly cut up. Her loss in men was very heavy, and the four shots which had hulled her, rendered her almost unseaworthy; but the action resulted in the capture of one schuyt by

Digitized by Google

the Seagull herself, while six others struck to Captain Honyman's little squadron. The Seagull was ordered home, and after narrowly escaping foundering at sea in consequence of her battered state, eventually reached Plymouth, where Goodwin received the reward of his gallantry.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

ST. DOMINGO.

THE November sun poured its full power over the beautiful hills and valleys of the French island of St. Domingo. Sloping down to the water's edge, and covered with verdure—the branches of the trees almost bending over the sea in places where the hills which form the boundary of the island towards the ocean, seemed to sink gently into the water, only losing their carpet of flowers and beautiful shrubs just where the salt sea touched them. Here and there a narrow valley gives exit to some small river rolling into the ocean, over a bed of silvery sand. Beautiful bays, and curious caves in the hill-sides, where the sea rolls in with a gentle moaning sound, mark the coast line; and the hills and valleys are alive with birds of gorgeous plumage, and with the buzz of insects. Away to seaward that morning, the ocean seemed as much at rest as the land. Not a sail was visible from the Mole of St. Nicolas, but the look-out at Cape François had signalled the presence of an armed vessel. There she lay about five miles from shore, her long black hull—motionless on the calm sea—and her white sails

Digitized by Google

flapping against her masts, while her long pennant hung motionless alongside. It was a calm, quiet scene both at sea and on shore; and the look-out stationed in the little battery on Cape François certainly had the best of it; for beautiful as the island looked, yet since the French Government had taken possession of it, there was very little happiness for either the conquerors or the conquered. During the short time that the two nations had been at peace, the French had been able to provision their troops by sea; but war had been declared, and the little man-of-war brig whose long black hull was gleaming in the sunshine far away to seaward, was but the look-out ship of an English squadron which had sailed from Port Royal to blockade the island. The natives, too, had risen against their oppressors; and though despicable enough in themselves, yet their incessant guerilla warfare thinned the ranks of the French army, and there was no means of recruiting the fast diminishing force. General Rochambeau was at his wit's end. Two heavy frigates were at his command, the Surveillante and the Clorinde, carrying forty guns each, beside a number of smaller craft; but the General well knew that the white sail in the offing was merely one of a heavy squadron of ships commanded by Commodore Loring, and that to send his frigates to sea, was to send them to certain capture. Nothing remained for him, and reluctantly he called in his advanced posts, gave up the greater part of the island to the insurgent blacks, and held

Digitized by Google

only the two ports above named—Cape François and St. Nicolas. Daily his situation was becoming more and more desperate. While the English fleet, well-provisioned, blockaded the sea-board, the insurgent blacks pressed hard on the French rear; and to add to this, the troops were on short rations. Scurvy now made its appearance, while the yellow fever broke out among the men. So matters stood in the month of June immediately after the declaration of war between England and France, and as no aid arrived, things went on from bad to worse; and though the French still held out on the two points already named, the fearful suffering and privation entailed on them made the surrender of the island and its garrison but a matter of time. Both officers and men were suffering fearfully, the French camp resembling a huge hospital, among whose sheds and huts emaciated men strolled hopelessly along; and whose echoes, once provoked by the merry laugh and jest of the thoughtless soldiers, were now only awoke by the passing groan of suffering or the far-away rattle of the musketry, telling of the incessant and mosquito-like attacks of the insurgent blacks. The commandant of St. Nicolas, General Jules Lacroix, was hard pressed by the insurgents, but harder still by famine. It was the 17th of November. A boat, manned by the sailors of the Clorinde, was waiting just outside the Mole; a white flag waved on a boat-hook lashed to a thwart in her bows. The men were lying on their oars, and were neatly and

Digitized by Google

cleanly dressed. They had evidently been chosen from the most healthy of the crew, and perhaps of the garrison of the island: but even among the chosen few, famine and sickness had done its work. There was none of the light-hearted gaiety of the Frenchman among that boat's crew; not a laugh or jest was heard as the boat rose and fell on the swell. On shore two officers were in close conversation, and some ten paces distant, a group of officers stood waiting the close of the conference.

The grey hair and rather stout person, the brilliant uniform and the numerous decorations of the one, spoke for themselves. It was the Commander-in-chief, General Rochambeau; while in the other, the lace of whose uniform was black, and tarnished with exposure and wear, the lookers-on recognized the spare but powerful form of General Jules Lacroix.

The broad and prominent forehead was, like the lace of his uniform, blackened by exposure; the shaggy eyebrows had become heavier and thicker; the large mouth, and its rows of faultless teeth, were still there, but the cheeks were yellow with sickness, and emaciated by care and famine. The eyes no longer sparkled with careless gaiety and good-humour. They were now deep sunken in the head, and seemed bright and lustrous, glancing here and there uneasily. If any footstep were heard on the gravel beach, a sudden start and a hasty question showed anxiety, and, perhaps, the fear of some evil tidings. In a word, if dejection and sorrow marked the

Digitized by Google

features of the one, nervous fear and apprehension were as plainly stamped on those of the other officer.

"It is a sad alternative, General Lacroix, but we have no other. If we are suffered to embark on board our ships, and free passage given us through the blockading force, I shall be satisfied, and my troops shall evacuate the island." It was Rochambeau who spoke.

"It is the first time I ever undertook such a mission, General, and, if you will allow my councils to weigh, I would say let us endeavour to cut our way through the insurgents, and either regain possession of St. Domingo, or die in the attempt."

A murmur of satisfaction made itself heard from the members of Rochambeau's staff, for Lacroix's eyes brightened as he spoke, and his voice was loud.

"Impossible," replied the old commandant; "and, were we even to succeed, how could we hold the island with the poor remnant of force left us, while, if beaten, women—children—all would be massacred by the blacks. No; humiliating as it is, we must trust to the English."

"I would trust the blacks sooner," said Lacroix.

"Enough," answered the old General, drawing himself up haughtily; "I command here, and you, gentlemen," he continued, turning to the escort, "you would do better to hope for the acceptance of such terms, than to murmur at the thought of

Digitized by Google

them. General Jules Lacroix, you have my ultimatum. The sooner your mission is fulfilled the better."

Turning from him, followed by his staff, General Rochambeau took his way sadly towards the fort; while in obedience to his orders, Lacroix, accompanied by a single aide, embarked. His doing so seemed the signal for action, for, as he stepped into the boat, the boom of a gun was heard; and, as the men bent to their oars, and the light gig drew out from the shelter of the mole, a large white flag was to be seen flying over the smoke from the gun, while soon a far-away flash, followed by a deadened report, came upon the breeze, as the answering gun was fired from the offing, where the black hull of the English brig of war was visible on the calm tropical sea, the flag of England waving in the light air which had just sprung up, its folds blowing clear. The brig wore round, bracing up her yards sharp, and heading for the boat; and as she did so, the little flags blowing out from her signal halyards, showed she was signalling her consorts in the offing. On board the English eighteen-gun brig the Seagull, at that moment the look-out vessel of Commodore Loring's squadron, all was silence and order. The hammocks were stowed, the ropes coiled down, and the brig slipping slowly through the water. The crew had just been piped to dinner, and the watch on deck were gathered in groups, discussing the probable nature of the communication about to

Digitized by Google

reach them. Captain Goodwin was leaning over the weather bulwarks, his first lieutenant standing near him, the light breeze just enabling the brig to hold her way, and keep her head in shore.

An hour slipped by, and the black speck, which had been with difficulty made out to be a boat, by the help of glasses, was now but a few hundred yards from the brig. The necessary orders were given, and the Seagull hove to. The boat was soon alongside, and General Lacroix received with the usual naval honours. Captain Goodwin had been on deck at the moment the Clorinde's gig touched the brig's counter, and the first lieutenant turned to receive his order. He had, however, suddenly disappeared, and a midshipman was sent down to announce the French general's arrival.

A few minutes elapsed, when a message arrived for General Lacroix, to the effect that the brig's captain a waited him in the cabin. General acroix descended slowly, step by step. A marine was on duty at the cabin door, who presented arms as the General passed him. The door opened; the first lieutenant, who had accompanied him so far, now left him, and the General entered the cabin. It was small, as the cabin of an eighteen-gun brig must necessarily be. At a table, with his back to the door, sat the Captain, in full naval uniform, nor did he turn or rise until the new comer was close to him. The instant he did so General Lacroix recognized him with a start, and something of the old humour

Digitized by Google

gleamed from his eyes, such as Goodwin remembered to have seen in the days of old.

Lacroix seemed to have forgotten that anything had passed between them which might have rendered their accidental meeting awkward to either of them, and a gleam of pleasure lighted up his care-worn face as he held out his hand.

"My old friend of the prison of the Temple, and so we meet once more," he said.

A heavy frown gathered on Goodwin's brow as he drew back.

"To what, General Lacroix, am I indebted for the honour of your visit on board His Majesty's brig Seagull?" he asked.

The colour sprang into the Frenchman's cheeks as he saw his proffered hand refused and himself so ceremoniously received.

He made an effort, however, to fathom what to him was a mystery, for with the levity of his nation he had thought no more of the past, the present need alone occupying his brain.

"Captain Goodwin, we were once good friends," he said; "we parted friends when last I saw you, at St. Valery-en-Caux. To what then am I to attribute your present conduct?"

"To subsequent events. Have you not wronged me, General Lacroix? When we last parted, as you say, at St. Valery, I was a released prisoner; nay, I was not even that, for your gendarmes only quitted me on the deck of the lugger which was to convey

Digitized by Google

me to England. I placed in your hands certain papers. I told you of my engagement to Isabel d'Hervily. You promised me to place those papers in her hands, and you kept your word, but you used your position to misrepresent me, and to deprive me of her whom I loved. General Jules Lacroix, you owe me reparation."

The General sat slowly down, and, leaning his elbows on the table, covered his face with his hands. A deep silence reigned in the cabin, so deep that the splash of the waves as they broke against the brig's counter was plainly heard.

The silence was becoming painful, when it was broken by Lacroix, without, however, removing his hands from his face. "Captain Goodwin," he said, in a low voice, "is this generous, is it just? I come to your vessel a broken man, conquered not by your ships, but by famine and disease. I represent a force which a few months since were masters of the island of St. Domingo, but which force has dwindled down to a few hundred famine-stricken and disheartened soldiers; is this the moment a brave enemy should choose to rake up old and forgotten grievances?"

Jules Lacroix must have been very much enfeebled by the trials of war, of famine, and of pestilence before he could have thus forgotten his old spirit and quietly submitted to the dictation of another.

"General Lacroix," returned Goodwin, evidently anything but softened by the other's humility, "when I returned to France my first care was to hasten to

Digitized by Google

Veules. There I found everything desolate, but there I learned your perfidy, and there I vowed that sooner or later we should meet and that perfidy should have its just reward."

The hands were now removed from the French General's face; the face itself was flushed with passion, and the old fire beamed from his eyes as Lacroix rose, pushing the chair from him as he did so.

"Captain Goodwin," he exclaimed, "you have no right to use these words. We both loved the same woman, circumstances favoured me, and I took advantage of those circumstances. They are now altered. Struck down by fortuitous events, the French force, under General Rochambeau, asks for honourable terms of capitulation. It is your duty to forward that request. Do your duty. For the rest, sickness has been among us, death has been busy, and aided by famine has decimated us. Your old friend, now Isabel Lacroix, lies on yonder island (he pointed through the opened port as he spoke to the far-away but beautiful hills of St. Domingo) struck down by fever. She may be living, or she may not when I return, but I fulfil a soldier's duty while I am here, and I demand a soldier's treatment. So much for my mission; now for myself. Once this matter settled, Captain Goodwin, I am at your service, and any satisfaction in my power you shall have. Do you still refuse my hand?"

Goodwin made a step forward. He had never

Digitized by Google

thought to grasp that hand again, but he did so, and there was more of sympathy than of anger in the grasp as he looked into the brilliant eyes and on the emaciated form of the once gay and dashing officer of the Guard. Turning to the table, on which a map of the island lay open, he rang a small hand-bell. "Pass the word for the first lieutenant," was the order given.

"Mr. Murray, fill away the foretopsail, make all sail on the brig, and lay her head for the Commodore's ship."

"Ay, ay, sir," returned the officer; as he left the cabin to run up the signal to speak the Commodore, and to fire a gun to windward.

"And now, General Lacroix," continued Goodwin, as the first lieutenant left the cabin, "you will be my guest until we have the reply, which none but the Commodore can give."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI.

SHIPWRECK *v.* DEATH.

RUNNING free, and with every sail set that would draw, a few hours sufficed for the Seagull to close the Commodore, a light frigate taking the brig's station in shore. General Lacroix did not attempt to conceal from Goodwin the perilous position of the French force, hard-pressed as it was by many enemies, and the wish expressed by General Rochambeau to receive terms from the English rather than from the insurgent blacks, commanded by General Dessalines. He told him also of Isabel's trials since their arrival in the island. How she had, on the French occupation, taken her rank among the ladies of the capital, how she had been the life and soul of the circle she moved in, and how, as the army were driven from post to post, and the limits of their conquered territory grew narrower and narrower, Isabel's spirits never flagged.

She was then a mother, and had written to her sister to join her in St. Domingo. This, Berthe, who had ever been true to her father's principles, and who had never mixed with the gay court which now began to flutter round the Emperor, had promised to

Digitized by Google

do, but, alas! the times grew worse and worse for the French force. Hardly pressed by overwhelming numbers, decimated by disease and dying of famine, Isabel's gay heart yet held out, until her child died, and she herself lay at death's door, struck down by fever.

It was four o'clock when the Seagull, under a press of canvas, ranged up under the Commodore's lee, and the brig's gig, with the French envoy, accompanied by Goodwin, left her. The errand was, however, a fruitless one, and the terms proposed, namely, the evacuation of the island on the condition of the French force being permitted to pass through the blockading squadron, were at once and energetically refused, the Seagull being ordered to convey General Lacroix back again, and to remain twenty-four hours hove to for any further communication from General Rochambeau.

Morning dawned slowly and heavily on the coasts of St. Domingo and the woody slopes near Cape François. The Seagull had run to within a few miles of the shore, standing in for the fort and harbour, on the flagstaff of which the white flag yet floated, but the wind had dropped, the sea had become calm as a mirror, and the air was still hot and heavy. The brig's sails were useless, and, though it was a long pull, yet anxious to reach shore, General Lacroix's request was complied with. The Clorinde's boat was once more manned and the brig's sails furled, while with a heartier squeeze of

Digitized by Google

the hand than Goodwin had ever thought to give his former rival again, the two parted, Lacroix to carry back Commodore Loring's refusal of the proffered capitulation, Goodwin to remain off the coast, according to instructions, twenty-four hours, waiting for further communications. The air was very oppressive, and the boat's-crew of the Clorinde, although they pulled well enough for the first mile or so, were not strong enough to keep up the regular and powerful sweep of the oars which would have carried them to the shore before the storm, which was evidently brewing, broke. The morning air seemed so sultry and oppressive that even when no exertion was called for, it seemed difficult to breathe, and the men's stroke became gradually feebler, until at length the boat just moved through the calm, leaden-looking water, leaving a train of frothy bubble behind. Absorbed in reflection, General Lacroix leaned back in the stern sheets, and seemed hardly to notice the state of the atmosphere, while the young officer in command of the boat's-crew urged the men on, from time to time, in a languid manner which showed that nearly fresh as he was to the climate, he felt the unnatural heat of the weather as much as they did. On board the English brig the canvas had been taken in, the ship made snug, and every precaution taken to meet any eventuality. A heavy, black cloud was resting on the horizon. It seemed stationary, but opened now and then, as a vivid, forked stream of lightning burst from it, seeming to run

Digitized by Google

along the thick darkness, and to be swallowed up by the cloud itself.

The boat was within a mile of the harbour when the first catspaws of the coming wind ruffled the water. Glad of the reprieve from their toil, the boat's mast was stepped, and the men laid in their oars, while the Seagull, setting her foretopsail and spanker, stood out slowly to seaward, close hauled. On board the brig they seemed to misdoubt the weather, but in the boat it was otherwise. Not a soul on board had any idea of the rapidity with which the tropical storms of those latitudes break, sweep over and lay desolate land and sea, and then subside again as suddenly, leaving sad traces of their fury behind. The General, completely buried in his own thoughts, gave little heed to anything passing around him. Though bearer of the English Commodore's written refusal to treat on any terms save those of unconditional surrender, he was more anxious on Isabel's account than he was on that of the French force. He had left her the day before struck down by the terrible fever which had prostrated so many —how should he find her? Suddenly he was roused from his reverie by a vivid flash of lightning darting from the clouds and burying itself with a hissing sound in the sea, while the dark-green line of the hurricane was to be seen coming up at racehorse speed. The brig had already felt it. Her foretopgallant mast was gone, and she was heeling over before the force of the wind, even though close

Digitized by Google

hauled, and the only two sails shown to its fury close reefed, as though on her beam-ends. Before them lay the harbour of Cape François, not a quarter of a mile distant, so near that people could be seen moving on the shore. "Slack away the fore sheet, down with the sail!" shouted the Clorinde's midshipman, but it was too late. Onward came the dark-green line, tearing up the sea in its fury, and carrying it forward like salt rain before the fierce blast. Flash after flash of lightning followed one on the other with startling rapidity, as the whole weight of the tropical hurricane burst on the boat.

The men were unnerved, the sheet was belayed fast, the nervous fingers working to undo it failed for a second or two in their purpose. That short moment decided the destiny of many, for the half-lowered sail bellied out, flapping wildly, and the boat cut through the water with frightful rapidity, seeming almost to be lifted out of it. One dazzling flash of lightning showed the men holding on by the gunwale, and the rattling thunder that instantly followed pealed in the ears of the drowning crew, mixed with the howling of the wind and the gurgling splash of the waves. Two of the crew never rose again, but the others clung to the boat, or to the floating oars. General Lacroix, who was a strong swimmer, though thrown at first some distance from the overturned boat, managed to regain it; but no help could reach those who yet survived. The wind increased in force; trees, sugar-canes, the roofs of

Digitized by Google

the houses, were all swept before it, and the grapnel of the boat falling loose, caught the ground as the wind drifted her inshore. Some six of the crew, together with the Clorinde's midshipman and General Lacroix, yet remained; but their last hope seemed gone, for the moment she felt the strain, the overturned boat began to dip under the waves, which were becoming heavier and heavier, and which now broke over her, making it very difficult for those who clung to her to keep their hold.

One after another they fell away. Weakened by privation and sickness, the men battled but feebly for life. The roar of the wind, and the crash of the thunder, prevented them making themselves heard; and within an hour after the boat upset, the midshipman, General Lacroix, and the old boatswain of the Clorinde, were the only ones left. The wind seemed to be abating, but the sea was heavier, and at last one wave, crested with foam, came rolling in from seaward. It struck the boat, burying her deep in the boiling foam, and rolled her over and over. The grapnel had given way, but the men were washed from their hold, and the next instant were struggling in the waves. Stern and determined, Lacroix struck out for life. The boatswain, too, rose on the crest of the wave, but it was evident he was lost. With a face sharpened with the death agony, the man came borne onwards in the seething brine. He passed not a yard from the spot where Lacroix was struggling for life, and his shrill death-

Digitized by Google

shriek came to the latter's ears as the poor boatswain took his last look on the angry ocean, and on the shore so near him, ere he sank for ever. But help was at hand for Lacroix; at last a heavy black spot came surging towards him; a loud cheering shout was borne down to his ears. It was too late; a huge wave buried the strong swimmer fathoms deep, tossing and rolling him about as though in sport. Once more he rose, but stunned and almost powerless.

Again the huge seas came on; he could hear the swish of the water, as it parted before the bows of the coming boat. The cheering shout rang out over the sea; and the green seas tumbled in upon him, and buried him beneath it. His life—France—Isabel, his wife—flashed across his brain; then a heavy weight seemed to strike him, and all became darkness.

The storm blew itself out, dying away in hollow mutterings and moanings. The beautiful shores of St. Domingo glistened in the moonlight, and the stars shone forth on a sea still agitated by the late storm, but gradually settling down to calm and quiet. From the windows of the white houses near the harbour of Cape St. François, lights were gleaming, and from one in particular the light was more brilliant than from others. A sentry before the door showed that some one of note inhabited that house, but though brilliantly lighted, not a sound was to be heard from it, save the monotonous step of the sentinel, as he paced to and fro in the veranda.

Digitized by Google

The houses of Cape François were like most houses in a hot country, a veranda running the whole length of the building; there were not any shutters to the windows, but a matting, now rolled up before all except one, served for shutters. The light streamed through the opened windows, and over the water of the port, dying away feebly in long, dancing lines, the murmur of the breaking waves, as they rolled on the shore, came in at the open windows, while, in the principal room of the house, General Rochambeau and the senior officers of the French force, sat in deep consultation. A council of war was sitting; General Lacroix had been saved, and the conditions proffered by the English commodore were under discussion.

Heavily pressed by the insurgent blacks under Dessalines, all communication with the island cut off, and unable to put to sea, there was but one course open, and that was unconditional surrender. Despite war, pestilence, and famine, the old warlike spirit of the French still shone forth; and the discussion, though carried on in a low voice, was a stormy one, many of the officers preferring to die sword in hand, or even to throw themselves on the generosity of the blacks, rather than submit to the English.

In a room above lay General Lacroix, yet insensible. He had been struck by the stem of the boat as it surged along to the rescue. The midshipman had gone down, and a few torn strips of wood and a broken oar or two were all that was ever found

Digitized by Google

of the Clorinde's gig. The General lay on a small camp bed, above the room where the council of war was being held, just as he had been left by the surgeon. A long unsnuffed candle flared away on the table, and beside it was a watch, whose loud ticking was distinctly audible in the stillness of the room. A wet and torn uniform hung over a chair near, whilst a long strip of linen, stained with blood, lay on the floor near the bed, just as it had fallen from the surgeon's hand. Hour after hour had passed thus, and in the confusion of the demoralised camp, General Lacroix still lay insensible. The watch ticked away, the candle-wick grew longer and longer, and the night sped on, as, alone and untended, General Lacroix slowly struggled back to life. His head seemed heavy and throbbing with intense pain, while nervous spasmodic twitches passed from time to time over his face, and do what he would he could not recall the closing incidents of that terrible struggle with the furious ocean. How he had been rescued he knew not, but the loud monotonous tick of the watch annoyed him. The long wick of the candle seemed to take fantastic shapes—the ghastly, pinched face of the old boatswain, as the waters closed over him for the last time, seemed to be peering at him from the darker corners of the room. He strove with these fancies, but his intellect, enfeebled by sorrow, privation, anxiety, and the effects of the late struggle, was unequal to the effort. Unable any longer to endure the silence and half

Digitized by Google

darkness, longing for the sound of a human voice to dispel the fancies crowding on his brain, and attracted perhaps by the low hum which came from the room below, where the council of war were deliberating, Lacroix arose. Wrapping his covering around him he took his way along the corridor, which ran from one end of the house to the other. A light streamed from under a door. This door opened into the room, the window of which was the only one closed, and which was darkened from without by the matting.

Lacroix opened the door and passed in, attracted he knew not why to that particular spot. An indefinable feeling of dread pervaded him as he glided from the passage into the room, which was brilliantly lighted. A bed stood in one corner, and Lacroix drew back the curtains. The light from the candles streamed in on the form of his wife, the large blue eyes were closed for ever; the long fair hair streamed down on the white linen. The calm, suffering, debilitated expression, which had marked her features during the latter months of her life yet remained, and the soldier stood in the presence of death. It seemed to him as though he had known it from the first, and the wild glare of incipient delirium lighting up his eye, he sat down by the bedside. He was talking aloud, but somehow he knew it, and checked himself. How long he sat there he never knew, but at length he rose, replaced the cold, dead hand he had grasped in his carefully on the bed, and

Digitized by Google

blowing out the lights one by one methodically, he opened the window, and drew up the thick matting. The cold night air blew in, and the quiet light of the moon and stars pervaded the room, playing tremulously over the still marble features of the dead, and tinging with silver the long fair hair. The past seemed to flit before him. The quiet days at St. Valery—the busy scenes of the Revolution—the plains of Italy—the hills and valleys of St. Domingo. He was now high in command; but what was all this to him, for he wandered in spirit over the heights of Veules, and sat in the cottage home where he had first met Isabel. Now he was on board the Seagull, and a strange joy pervaded his frame, as he remembered his promise. Yes, he would live, and live to revenge himself for Isabel's death, for her privations and sorrows, on the English who had occasioned them. Strange forms seemed to come around him, invisible hands seemed to help him, as he strewed some flowers he found in a vase over the dead form. Strange and beautiful shapes came in with the moonlight, and the work went on merrily, while the calm moon poured its light over the living and the dead, and the ceaseless roll of the waves came sounding in to the little death chamber.

How long this lasted he never knew, but the grey light was peeping in, and the conference below had broken up hours before, when General Lacroix was found sitting by the bed, with the hand of the dead clasped in his. His head had fallen forward on the

Digitized by Google

bed, and he was insensible, while the bandage having given way, the blood had welled from the wound in his head, staining the marble hand, and dyeing the long fair hair with crimson. General Lacroix recovered, and the surrender of the French force became a matter of history.

The warlike spirit of the French prevailed. Commodore Loring's terms were refused, and General Rochambeau surrendered the place to the blacks, intending himself to put to sea, and run the gauntlet of the English fleet. In this he failed, and all his ships, including the Surveillante and the Clorinde, fell into the power of the English. General Lacroix retired to St. Nicolas, and obstinately refused to surrender. One night, after suffering most severely, the French force under his command put to sea, and actually escaped, but before they reached Cuba they fell in with an English cruiser of inferior force. General Lacroix, who had never wholly recovered from the shock of his battle with the ocean, so closely followed by Isabel's death, now appeared once more himself again. Taking the command, he showed the English flag, and thus decoyed the enemy within reach. Keeping his men close, he managed to close and fall on board the English corvette. The next moment her decks were covered with the French soldiers. Surprised and out-numbered, the English fought bravely, but it was useless. General Lacroix led on the boarders in person, fighting like a madman. The English were mercilessly slaughtered, and the

Digitized by Google

corvette became a prize to the French, but General Lacroix was among the wounded. The old wound in his head broke out again, and when the remnants of the French force reached Cuba, he was carried on shore, and survived only three days, dying a brave soldier, but an unsuccessful man.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

LA DILIGENTE.

MORNING was just breaking over the sea, the wind was light and variable, and as the day wore on seemed likely to die away altogether. The long, low line on the horizon told of land, and the watch on deck knew that the coast-line trending away on the starboard bow of the English 18-gun brig Seagull, was that of the island of Martinique.

The Seagull had been some time on the station, and officers and men were heartily sick of it. One continual sequence of fine weather—the sea-breeze in the morning, the land-breeze at night—a sail seen now and then, and almost invariably lost after a chase of an hour or two—or just able to run in shore and take shelter under the fire of one of the French batteries where the brig could not follow—day after day passing in the same tedious monotony, wore out the patience of all; and the cry of "Sail ho!" shortly after day broke, excited no stir among the men busy washing down the brig's white decks. Sail after sail was set, however, and the direction of the brig's bows slightly altered, so that she stood straight for the little white cloud on the distant horizon, with

Digitized by Google

the wind free, and slipping through the water at the rate of about six knots an hour. The strange sail was soon made out to be a corvette, and to be standing in for land under easy sail when first seen, but her course was soon changed; and this, coupled with her rig, proclaimed her an armed vessel, and, in all probability, an enemy. At half-past seven o'clock the Seagull had neared sufficiently to make her out to be an 18-gun ship corvette, but whether French or English it was impossible to tell.

"Show the private signal, Mr. Murray," said Captain Goodwin.

The signal remained unanswered, and the beat to quarters now resounded through the brig, calling all into life and activity, and at once putting an end to the monotony of the long and pointless cruise.

"She has gone about, sir," said the quartermaster, "and the breeze is freshening."

The brig tacked also, and as she was in stays, two of the bow guns were fired, when, as if answering to this appeal, the French tricolor waved from the mizen peak of the corvette. The breeze was now much fresher, and the Seagull staggering along on the starboard tack, with everything set to her royals, her men at quarters, and the guns cast loose, while the French corvette, the Diligente, evidently not averse to the combat, was standing on under easy sail on the larboard tack, her jib, topsails, and spanker only set. The consequence of this was, that the

Digitized by Google

Seagull came up with her, hand over hand, and at half-past eight o'clock, ranged up alongside, almost within pistol shot. The Frenchman's broadside was given at once; a few ropes flew loose, and the crashing, splintering sound of the wood, told that the brig had not escaped in her hull.

"Now, my lads, give it her cheerily!" shouted Captain Goodwin, who had been wounded in the arm by the very first shot fired, but who, wrapping a handkerchief round the wound, remained on deck. The roar of the guns now drowned every other sound, but the Seagull, forging ahead, passed out of the line of fire, while the Diligente went about.

"'Bout ship, Mr. Murray; send the men aloft, and strip the brig to her topsails: be handy, men," cried Goodwin.

The Seagull, like her adversary, tacked, and again the two vessels exchanged broadsides; but the Diligente wore round, in order that she might rake the Seagull, and this she would assuredly have done had not Goodwin, with great quickness, perceived the manœuvre. The brig wore also, and the two vessels were again broadside to broadside, running almost before the wind. It was evident that the English brig had met her match. The Seagull's crew were in first-rate order, their discipline was perfect, and the men, during their long service inshore at the time the French flotilla was blockaded by the English, had been practised daily at the guns: the effect of their fire was soon visible in the

Digitized by Google

shattered state of the Diligente's hull; but Captain Dumaresque, who commanded the French corvette, was not a man to be easily beaten.

The Diligente had formed one of a small squadron of three French corvettes, which had sailed from the port of Lorient on the 9th August, bound for Martinique, with stores and war munitions for the garrison. The Espiègle and the Sylphe had both been captured: the first by the 18-gun sloop, the Comet; the second by the 38-gun frigate, the Sybille; and the Diligente was the only one of the squadron left.

Broadside to broadside the action continued, the French firing principally at the masts and rigging of her opponent, her object being not capture, but escape—the Seagull battering away at the Diligente's hull. About half-past eleven Mr. Murray, severely wounded, was carried down below, while a musket-ball from the foretop of the Frenchman had hit Goodwin in the leg. To add to his misfortunes, the mainmast of the Seagull, which had been struck, went by the board, while the Diligente, backing her main-topsail, passed under the brig's stern, raking her, and then ranging along the Seagull's starboard beam, received her fire.

The Seagull was now a wreck, or nearly so; for, with her foremast alone standing and her sails riddled, she could only run before the wind, while the Diligente, though terribly cut up in the hull, could sail round her antagonist, and fire into her as she liked.

Digitized by Google

This Captain Dumaresque prepared to do; for, bearing athwart the bows of the crippled brig, he poured in his broadside, and then, bracing up his yards, came sweeping down her larboard beam, within a few feet. On board the Seagull the men had cut away the wreck of the mainmast, and, with the stern doggedness of the English seaman, were busy knotting and splicing the rigging.

Goodwin saw that he was beaten, and that his only chance was to lay his brig alongside the French corvette, and board; but how was this possible in his crippled state? Weak with loss of blood, he still remained on deck, cheering on his men, who worked incessantly at their guns; but the long black hull of the corvette was again sweeping on, her sharp bows sheering up with the counter of the brig, and her decks were swarming with men.

"Hold your fire, my lads!" shouted Goodwin. "Quartermaster, give the brig as broad a sheer to port as possible—send her jib-boom into the Frenchman!"

It was a last effort; but, except by some lucky accident, it was impossible: still, it was the brig's last chance, and, as the hull of the corvette ranged up alongside, discharging her guns as they could bear into the brig, not a shot was returned. The Frenchman's boats were filled with marines, who kept up a galling fire on the brig's decks; and the splintering of the wood, the roar of the corvette's guns, and the cheers of her crew, formed a striking

Digitized by Google

contrast to the silent determination of the English as the corvette ranged a-beam.

"Now, my lads, give it her—fire!"

The guns of the Seagull answered Goodwin's voice in one heavy roar, and so well directed was the fire, that one of the corvette's boats filled with marines was shot away, every man being killed or wounded, while a quantity of cartridge carelessly stowed aft exploded, blowing up a part of the corvette's quarter, damaging her rudder, and committing great havoc among her crew. The ship herself flew up to the wind, while the helm of the brig being at the same time jammed hard a-starboard, the two vessels fouled each other, the bow of the corvette striking the brig's counter, and her bowsprit projecting over her deck.

"Boarders away!" shouted Goodwin, seizing the opportunity, and forgetting at that moment his wounds and loss of blood.

Over the corvette's bows, along her bowsprit, swarmed the English sailors, and a desperate mêlée ensued. Thrown into confusion by the explosion, and though comparatively uninjured in her gear, yet terribly battered in her hull, the corvette now had the worst of it; and though her gallant captain did his best, the hand-to-hand conflict was all in favour of the English. The two vessels swung clear; but, after an obstinate fight of ten minutes, the resistance ceased, and the French tricolor was hauled down.

Digitized by Google

The Seagull's loss was small. Her captain and first lieutenant wounded; one man killed and seven hurt; while on board the Diligente twenty-two men had been wounded—most of them mortally; the list of dead amounted to three officers and fifteen men. And the brig had little to boast of, for had it not been for the accident of the explosion nothing could have saved her from capture. The action had lasted from half-past seven o'clock till two.

The two vessels were now hove to, and the work of repairing damages went on merrily. Boats were continually passing between the brig and corvette, the wounded of both nations were attended to, decks washed, prisoners secured; and, strange to say, by five o'clock that day, the Seagull had cleared away the wreck, and rigged a jury mainmast, had set a spare top-gallant sail upon it, and had remounted and rebreeched her carronades, several of which had been upset. Her prize, a fine corvette of three hundred and seventy-one tons, keeping her company, the two bore away for Port Royal, and it was not till all this was effected that Captain Goodwin, who had returned to the brig, went below to place himself under the surgeon's hands.

Engrossed by the state of his own vessel, Goodwin had paid little attention to his prize, contenting himself with transferring the prisoners to the brig, except the corvette's captain, who, sorely wounded, remained on board his late ship. The second lieutenant of the brig had charge of her, Mr. Murray

Digitized by Google

being badly hurt. "The captain of the French corvette wishes to speak to Captain Goodwin," was the message brought to the latter just as the surgeon had finished, and had pronounced the wounds slight.

"Very good; signal the corvette to close," replied Goodwin, "and pipe away my gig."

The wind had lulled, and the brig, with her jury mainmast and diminished sail, was barely slipping through the water. Evening was closing in, to be quickly followed by the beautiful night of the tropics. Just as Goodwin stepped on deck the surgeon's report was handed him. One of the wounded men asked to see him, and the man was seriously hurt. Several minor matters had to be attended to, in the weakened state of the brig's crew, and it was night, and the stars shining brilliantly when the English captain stepped on the deck of his prize. With a seaman's never failing instinct he glanced his eye aloft. The corvette's tall tracery of spars loomed black in the starlight, and she was moving noiselessly along through the water, under precisely the same sail as she had carried before the fight, the wind free. About a quarter of a mile from her, and slightly astern, the dark hull and white canvas of the crippled brig was discernable, she also going noiselessly through the water, but showing every rag of sail her wounded spars permitted. Goodwin's heart beat high as he took a turn up and down the quarter-deck.

"She sails well, Mr. Gibson," he observed to the officer in charge, who had just joined him. "I doubt

Digitized by Google

if the brig could have caught her had she run, but her captain is a gallant fellow, anyhow, and has clipped our wings for us.

"Captain Dumaresque is dead, sir. He died shortly after we signalled you."

"Dead is he; poor fellow! Well, he died a sailor's death, and but for a lucky accident his fate had been ours. What did he want with me, do you know, Mr. Gibson?"

Goodwin had paused in his quarter-deck walk as he received intelligence of the death of the corvette's late captain, and was leaning over the ship's side thoughtfully as he spoke. He started suddenly, for the reply to his query came in a different voice.

"To recommend his passengers to your care, Captain Goodwin."

Goodwin turned quickly, and by the light of the stars, saw a lady standing on the corvette's deck.

"Mademoiselle d'Hervily," he stammered, in surprise, "how on earth came you here?"

"We embarked at Lorient, I and three other passengers, the wives of some of the officers of General Rochambeau's force, a passage being given us to St. Domingo."

The second lieutenant had moved away, but was now recalled. Special instructions were issued, first of all to dispose of the body of the unfortunate but gallant Frenchman, and then strict orders were given respecting the passengers, of whose presence on board Goodwin had been in ignorance, though he

Digitized by Google

had known from General Lacroix of Mademoiselle d'Hervily's expected arrival. This done he joined her again.

"And are you aware, dear Berthe, of the fate of Rochambeau's expedition, and of—of the——"

"Yes; a French barque, which had run the gauntlet of your cruisers, gave us the intelligence, and I would have returned, but it was impossible. A gale of wind separated us from the barque, and during the gale the two ships which sailed with us from Lorient parted from us, and we saw them no more. We had hoped to have landed this very day at Martinique.

It was late when the gig returned to the Seagull, and the hail of the sentry startled Goodwin from a deep reverie, as it came across the sea. It was nearly calm, and, what with the emotions consequent on the events of a busy day, and the thoughts of the past crowding on his brain, conjured up by the unexpected meeting with Berthe, Goodwin passed a sleepless night. Daylight found him pacing the brig's quarter-deck in deep thought. A busy day succeeded, and all hands were at work with the jury main-mast. It was night before Goodwin was able to leave the brig, which now carried an old foresail and foretopsail on her makeshift mainmast, the two vessels holding their way across the waters in close company.

Light winds and calms rendered the passage a long one. The Seagull sailed slowly, and, though

Digitized by Google

the corvette could have run her out of sight, yet this was not allowed. Captain Goodwin passed a great part of his time on board her, and it is seldom, indeed, it falls to a sailor's lot to pass his time as Goodwin passed his. The French officers on board proved pleasant companions, and having once given their parole, which they did, but little surveillance was necessary. Berthe and her companions were free as air, and, but for the English sailors on board, no difference in their mode of life was perceptible. They had intended to land at Martinique, and, instead of that, they would have to find their way home from Port Royal. The Seagull would in all probability be ordered to England, to repair damages, and the means of return thus be afforded. Captain Goodwin and his officers soon became favourites, and it was almost with regret the cry of "Land ho!" was heard one day from the foretop. It was the island of Jamaica, and that evening the crippled Seagull, with the corvette following, dropped anchor in Port Royal harbour.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

PORT ROYAL.

THE lights glimmered in the town, and sent out long streams of dancing flame across the water of the port. The hum and bustle of the day had ceased, and except the ring of the bells, as the hour was struck on board the men-of-war in the harbour, or a hoarse hail, and the splash of oars, telling of some passing boat, all was still. The stars shone out brightly, and the moon was just sinking below the horizon. The Seagull lay at anchor in Port Royal Bay. Goodwin had reported his action with the French corvette, the prisoners had been sent on shore, and the ladies on board her had been invited to take up their residence in the Governor's house, until they could be sent back to France. The Seagull's gig, with one man on board as boatkeeper, was veered astern of the corvette. On her deck, the watch was set for the night, and looking over her bulwarks, two forms might have been noticed —Berthe d'Hervily and Goodwin had been talking long over the scenes of their past life.

"I can hardly tell you, dear Berthe," said Goodwin, in a low voice, after a long silence, "how

Digitized by Google

pleasant the repose of the last few weeks has been to me. It is, indeed, an oasis of rest in the desert of a rough life."

There was a tear in Berthe's eye, but it fell from the black orbs unseen in the glimmering starlight, and again the two sank into silence.

"To-morrow," resumed Goodwin, "you will leave the corvette. I am ordered home with despatches, and only a week given me to repair damages. We may never meet again."

"And the corvette," asked Berthe, "does she, too, return?"

"No," replied her companion; "she is to change her name, as she has changed her nation, and, under that of the St. Pierre, is to be admitted into the English navy."

"And did the Governor make any promise as to our return to France?" asked Berthe.

"None; to-morrow the Governor's boat will be alongside, and you will all leave the corvette. Berthe, it seems to me that we should not separate thus."

The tears were streaming down from the black eyes now, but though unseen, they were not unfelt, for Goodwin had a hand clasped in his, and the hot tears fell upon them as they stood. "I have looked into the past," continued Goodwin, "in the silence of the night; I have thought well and deeply over it. I don't think, dear Berthe, I am wrong, when I say I have always loved you."

"Always?" asked a tremulous voice.

Digitized by Google

"Look back with me, my dear Berthe, through the long vista of past years. Before we met, your father shared with me the perils of land and sea; though belonging to nations at war with one another, strange to say, his enemies were my enemies. He died almost in my arms, I received his last orders, and I fulfilled them even to my own loss."

The moon had now sunk entirely below the horizon, and so calm was the water of the bay that the reflection of the stars quivered on it as Berthe looked down into the mysterious depths of the tropical sea, and thought of the blue eyes of her sister Isabel.

"Chance, or rather the hand of Providence, guiding the battle and the storm, threw us together for a time. I became an inmate of the dark prisons of the Temple, and while I wasted my life away a hopeless prisoner, the recollection of the days we had passed together were my only solace. Isabel's gaiety and lightness of spirit seemed congenial to my own, but, dear Berthe, your form and your memory dwelt unconsciously with me in the darkness of my prison life. We met again under the oaks and beeches of the old forest in a moment of danger. I knew not my own feelings; but, Berthe, my life was placed there at your service, as it ever will be."

There was a merry glance in the tearful eyes as Berthe looked up from the blue water full into Goodwin's, and the bright starlight streamed over the beautiful face and darted down into the black eyes as she did so.

Digitized by Google

"And, Richard, the flowers before the altar of the Good Ladie, and the vow of sisterly affection?"

"The devil take the flowers!" ejaculated the sailor, with a laugh.

Morning dawned slowly over the calm tropical sea, the lights in the town paled before it at first, and were then gradually extinguished. The morning gun boomed over the water, and Goodwin and Berthe saw the sunrise, watched the lights as they disappeared, and started at the sound of the gun as it came sweeping on the air. The gig's crew, who had turned in on the main deck just where they could, and who had slept away the night as only sailors can, now woke. The different ships in harbour seemed to wake up too into life and activity, and Captain Richard Goodwin, of His Britannic Majesty's 18-gun brig the Seagull, took his way towards the shore, a happier and more contented man than he had been for years.

At the Governor's house he found new orders awaiting him. The Seagull was to be hove down and repaired as best she might be, and both she and the corvette were directed to rendezvous at Barbadoes, to join a squadron under the command of Commodore Samuel Hood, for the purpose of attacking the island of Surinam.

This was a bitter disappointment to Goodwin, and he frankly stated his case to the Governor. Mademoiselle d'Hervily became an inmate of the Governor's house, and was placed under the protection of his wife.

Digitized by Google

On the 3rd of April the two vessels received their sailing orders, and that morning the bells of Port Royal rang a merry peal, and a crowd of black fellows stood before the doors of Government House, laughing, chatting, and grinning. That morning Richard Goodwin and Berthe were married, the Governor giving away the bride, and that evening the Seagull brig and St. Pierre corvette stood out of the port, and shaped a course for Barbadoes, the bride remaining a guest at Government House.

At Barbadoes a strong squadron, consisting of the 74-gun ship Centaur, bearing the broad pennant of Commodore Hood; the 44-gun ship the Pandour, Serapis, Alligator, with a fleet of transports, frigates, and brigs were waiting, and after a passage of twenty-two days made the island of Surinam. It would be useless to follow the movements of this powerful fleet and army. The boats of the fleet and the smaller craft had a busy time of it, and no one was more conspicuous for his zeal than Goodwin. His name was mentioned in despatches, and when, on the 5th of May, the Batavian commander-in-chief capitulated, and the colony passed to the British, the Seagull was sent with the tidings to Jamaica. The Governor, after forty-eight hours' stay at Port Royal, ordered Captain Goodwin home, the bearer of his own tidings. The battle of Trafalgar had put an end to the maritime power of France, but Goodwin, in command of a fine frigate, on more than one occasion distinguished him-

Digitized by Google

self. The final fall of Buonaparte at length permitted Sir Richard and Lady Goodwin to revisit France, and to wander over the same spots where so many incidents of their early life had been passed. The good curé of Veules was yet alive, but the old house had become more and more dilapidated. The farmer who owned it had died, and it passed into Goodwin's possession for a small sum. Should the reader ever wander on the heights between Dieppe and St. Valery, and curiosity should tempt him to the quiet little village of Veules, where many of the incidents of our simple tale occurred, they will there find the old house in good repair, and hardly altered from what it was the day when the English prisoner of war was borne from it to be consigned to the prison of the Temple. They will find a little marble tablet erected in the quiet church to the memory of the good old curé, and beside it another, placed there in remembrance of Count d'Hervily, who died in the service and for the cause of his king and country. The bright sun of St. Domingo streams over Isabel's grave, and Lacroix's name still lives as that of a gallant soldier,and one who, even in the last extremities of war, sickness, and famine, kept his country's flag untarnished, and saved the remnant of the force under his command from capture and capitulation.

THE END.

Digitized by Google

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google